



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Rights and Democracy:

The 2014 Foreign &
Commonwealth Office Report



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The 2014 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
by Command of Her Majesty

March 2015



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Executive Summary

This report provides a UK perspective on the global human rights situation **during 2014**, and examples of what the government is doing to promote human rights and democratic values overseas. It reviews the situation in specific countries and against the thematic priorities around which our work is organised.

One of the most striking trends of 2014 was the pressure put by governments on **civil society organisations** in many parts of the world, damaging human rights and the economic interests of those same countries. Chapter I focuses on the protection of civil society space and those who defend it. It sets out how the UK has worked through the UN and features case studies on Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and **Burma**. It describes what the UK is doing to support **human rights defenders**, including through the EU, particularly in **Afghanistan**.

2014 was an important year for our Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), marking two years since its launch. Chapter II sets out achievements in this area, including the **Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict** and increasing support for the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and our plans to address the myriad challenges that remain.

Chapter III focuses on the **FCO's programme and project work** on human rights, with case studies on each of our priority areas, and the steps we have taken to mainstream human rights across the FCO network. It also includes material on the **Department for International Development's** work on economic and social rights.

Chapters IV, V, VI and VII cover issues related to our **six thematic priorities**: freedom of expression on the internet, abolition of the death penalty, torture prevention, freedom of religion or belief, women's rights, and business and human rights.

Chapter IV focuses on freedom of expression and democracy. Acknowledging that **democracy** takes many forms, and evolves over time, the UK's own experience strengthens our conviction that democracy offers the best system for protecting human rights, guaranteeing the rule of law, supporting economic development and preventing conflict. This chapter sets out the UK's approach to democracy strengthening, including work carried out by the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy**. It features case studies on democratic developments and challenges during 2014, such

as the **Fijian** and **Tunisian** elections, and the military coup in Thailand.

Freedom of expression is an essential element of any functioning democracy, and this section also features our work in this area, through fora like the Freedom Online Coalition, in which the UK plays a leading role. It includes case studies on countries where media freedoms were under threat in 2014, such as **China**, **Ethiopia** and **Honduras**.

Chapter V sets out our work on **abolition of the death penalty** and on **torture prevention**, and our efforts to support the international justice system. Our ambition remains a world free of capital punishment and torture, where there can be no impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It is also strongly in our interest, and those of our international partners, that the citizens of all countries can fulfil their potential, free from discrimination on any grounds. Chapter VI describes our efforts to promote equality internationally, including by focusing on: **freedom of religion or belief**, with case studies on the Middle East, South East Asia, and ISIL; anti-Muslim hatred, antisemitism and post-Holocaust issues (particularly the UK's chairmanship of the **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance**).

This chapter also illustrates the priority we attach to **women's rights**, and children's rights, with case studies on **India**, and on the **Girl Summit** (hosted by the Prime Minister in June 2014), which changed the terms of global debate on child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation; **LGBT rights**, where the UK promoted inclusive societies in all parts of the world and condemned restrictions and violence against LGBT people (including by action in international fora); and **disability** and **indigenous** rights.

Chapter VII explores the human rights dimension of the UK's **security** agenda: counter-terrorism; reducing conflict and building stability overseas; **women, peace and security**, and the protection of civilians. It features case studies on Boko Haram in **Nigeria**, and **Ebola**.

Chapter VIII focuses on **business and human rights**, setting out our progress on implementation of the UK National Action Plan, and our efforts to promote responsible business practice internationally.

Protecting the human rights of **British nationals overseas** is a top priority. Chapter IX describes the actions taken by our officials to support those who are detained, facing the

death penalty, forced into marriage, at risk of female genital mutilation, or involved in child abduction cases.

As a nation with global interests, the UK has both the motive and the means to shape the international community's response to human rights priorities. Chapter X details how we worked through the international system in 2014, with a particular focus on the **UN Human Rights Council**, where we resumed our seat as a voting member, and have had a positive impact on issues from **Sri Lanka** to freedom of religion or belief. This chapter also looks at how we work through the **European institutions** and the **Commonwealth**, and includes a case study on the international response to **Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea** and separatist-occupied areas of **Ukraine**.

The UK government expects **Overseas Territories** which choose to remain British (for example, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Gibraltar etc.) to abide by the same basic standards of human rights as the UK. Chapter XI sets out how we continued to pursue our programme to extend core UN human rights conventions to the territories where possible, and to implement child safeguarding initiatives.

The final section of this report contains an assessment of the human rights situation in **27 countries** where the UK has wide-ranging concerns. Online, we continue to report on developments in these countries on a quarterly basis. Our concerns, and the manner in which we raise them, is rooted in a desire to understand the local context, and to help these governments extend to all their citizens the full benefit of human rights we enjoy ourselves.

Foreword by Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond

In 2015 we mark the 800th anniversary of the sealing of **Magna Carta**, one of the major waypoints in the UK's own journey to democracy. While time has passed, the concepts that Magna Carta contends with – equality before the law, due process, limits to the arbitrary exercise of power – are as relevant today as they were then. When I was appointed Foreign Secretary on 15 July 2014, human rights – particularly the damage done when they are not respected – were never far from the headlines. ISIL had just launched its crime wave in Iraq and **Syria**. Elsewhere in the Middle East, tensions were rising after the murders of **Israeli** and Palestinian teenagers. And a deteriorating situation in eastern **Ukraine** was suddenly compounded by the tragic shooting down of a **Malaysian** Airlines passenger jet.

During the subsequent nine months, I have visited 42 countries, at the time of writing, and met a wide variety of leaders and opposition figures, civil society and human rights protagonists, at home and abroad. I have seen countless examples of the mutually reinforcing relationship between our values, the **rules-based international system** designed to project and defend them, and other aspects of our national interest, such as global security, wider prosperity and fair treatment for UK citizens overseas.

This January, in a speech to mark the anniversary of **Magna Carta**, I described good governance, the accountability that rests on equality before the law, and freedom of speech, as the building blocks of successful societies; and successful societies as the building blocks of a secure and prosperous international community. It is in the UK's national interest to help our international partners promote, protect and enjoy human rights; and to find effective ways to tackle violations wherever they occur.

We achieved a great deal in 2014, but I would like to highlight three issues in particular.

The **Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict**, held in June in London, brought together over 120 countries and launched the first International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The **Girl Summit**, hosted by the Prime Minister in July, was the first ever global conference on ending Female Genital Mutilation and Child, Early and Forced Marriage. To date, 480 organisations and individuals (including 42 governments) have signed the Girl Summit Charter, which sets out specific actions to end these practices.

The UK's chairmanship of the **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance** and associated work to combat antisemitism assumed fresh significance for me when I attended the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau on 27 January 2015. The unprecedented horror of the Holocaust continues to hold universal meaning, and should be an eternal reminder of the importance of protecting human rights.



I am encouraged by progress made during the UK's first year back on the **UN Human Rights Council (HRC)**. Multilateral institutions, when they play an objective and impartial role, can produce practical responses to human rights challenges and strengthen the consensus around fundamental freedoms. Seeking to lead by example, the UK again presented a mid-term (voluntary) report on its response to recommendations received under the **Universal Periodic Review**. In 2014, at the UN and in other fora, we were active on many key country situations, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), **Syria**, **Iraq** and **Burma**.

The UK used its position on the HRC to promote an international investigation into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights in **Sri Lanka** during the recent conflict. In March 2014 the HRC established such a mechanism. Since then, President Maithripala Sirisena has been elected with a mandate to lead a more accountable government, including restoring the independence of the police and judiciary and media freedoms, and ensuring the protection of religious minorities. I am encouraged by the new government's early statements and actions. The UK stands ready to support delivery of the promised reforms.

The long road from Magna Carta to modern democracy in the UK teaches us to value evolution over revolution. Throughout 2014, the example of **Tunisia** was heartening. It became the first "Arab Spring" country to complete transition to democracy by holding a full-term parliamentary election and its first

democratic presidential election. 2014 also marked the first peaceful, constitutional transfer of power in **Afghanistan**. This Annual Report also sees the graduation of **Fiji** from our list of “countries of concern”, after the restoration of democracy in that Commonwealth country.

As I said two months ago, the values of **Magna Carta** are incremental in their establishment, universal in their relevance, and adaptable in their application. Another of its lessons, despite all the setbacks of 2014, is that we must stay the course.

Foreword by Minister for Human Rights Baroness Anelay

Since my appointment as Minister with responsibility for human rights at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), I have been privileged to work on some of the world's most pressing issues. Despite the daunting scale of the challenges we face, I have met and been inspired by many committed individuals over the last seven months. These have included:

- > members of my advisory groups – on abolition of the death penalty, global torture prevention, freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of expression online – who have provided insights and practical suggestions;
- > members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society, who have brought to my attention issues such as the risks faced by human rights defenders in **Afghanistan**, and worked tirelessly to protect the rights of others;
- > parliamentary colleagues, particularly members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights, who have deepened our analysis and extended our reach; and
- > international colleagues – likeminded and less so – whom I have met on my visits to the UN in Geneva and New York, whose views I respect, as we search for that elusive highest common factor; or fall back on condemnatory resolutions.

I have also been privileged to see the House of Lords “from the other side” since last August, and am full of admiration for the close scrutiny to which the government is subjected by Peers, particularly on human rights.

The most negative trend of 2014 was the shrinking space for civil society in many parts of the world. Since January 2012, 78 laws in 54 countries have been proposed that directly affect the ability of NGOs to operate. As this report describes, civil society is the human rights landscape. Its organisations and individuals are on the frontline, speaking up when others cannot. If we allow this space to close, more lives will be at risk. That is why our topical chapter focuses on **protecting civil society space** and **human rights defenders**.

On the positive side, we achieved a great deal during 2014, sustaining progress over the course of this Parliament. The FCO continued to focus on six thematic priorities.

On **women's rights**, in addition to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence and the Girl Summit, we launched the UK's third National Action Plan on women, peace and security which aims to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls, and to promote their inclusion in conflict resolution. We followed this with the launch of a groundbreaking

Implementation Plan, with activity planned in a number of key countries, such as encouraging female candidates to take part in elections in **Afghanistan**. In November, I went to Oslo to attend the High Level Symposium on Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan, where I gave the closing speech and reaffirmed the UK's long-term support to Afghan women and human rights defenders.



On **freedom of expression**, the recent attacks in Ottawa, Sydney, Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen – and, perhaps more significantly, the strong and determined public reaction – have shown how fundamental the right to speak and express ourselves is held to be. It underpins all the other rights which distinguish progressive, innovative and democratic societies from those where ideas are feared and discouraged. Increasingly, freedom of expression is exercised online; and threats to freedom of expression are felt there too. In 2014 the UK continued to play a leading role in the Freedom Online Coalition, a group of like-minded countries committed to promoting internet freedom. We did so also through multilateral institutions, actively engaging in discussions on the right to privacy, as part and parcel of all our citizens' human rights.

On **abolition of the death penalty**, our civil society partners, including students and parliamentarians, have again provided tremendous help identifying opportunities where the UK could make a difference. I spoke at an event at Birmingham City University which highlighted the case of Meriam Ibrahim, sentenced to death in **Sudan** for allegedly changing her religion, though thankfully later released due to the efforts of many local and international supporters. The direction of change is positive. This year's resolution on abolition of the death penalty at the UN General Assembly secured more votes in favour than ever before. In the UK we marked the 50th anniversary of the last execution – not claiming moral high

ground, but seeking to use our own experience of this complex debate to convince others to follow in our footsteps.

On global **torture prevention**, we persevered with our international strategy, and worked with others to focus attention on the 30th anniversary of the Convention Against Torture (CAT). We encouraged governments to sign and ratify the convention and its optional protocol (OPCAT). We welcomed the accession to the CAT by **Eritrea**; the ratification of the OPCAT by **Finland** and **Greece**, and the accession to the OPCAT by **Lithuania**, **Morocco** and **Mozambique**.

On **business and human rights**, working closely with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), we continued to implement our National Action Plan. Highlights have included: guidance for the ICT sector on human rights risks related to cyber exports; guidance to UK officials on providing human rights advice to UK companies; and work with the financial sector to help develop guidance on human rights reporting and transparency for investors, which will have a multiplier effect across the economy.

On **freedom of religion or belief**, I am indebted to my predecessor, Baroness Warsi, for the way she developed this agenda. A global study by the Pew Forum in 2014 found that restrictions on religion were at a six-year high. Where freedom of religion or belief is under attack, other fundamental freedoms often face threat too. In response, we set up a new, expert advisory group, increased training to improve the FCO's religious literacy and used these insights to inform our work in multilateral fora and individual country situations, including a whole of government approach to defeating the so-called Islamic State for Iraq and the Levant and addressing extremism more widely. We are motivated by deep concern for religious communities in the Middle East; and by a desire to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all parties of goodwill. I found such allies on visits to the **Holy See** and to **Morocco**. I have discussed strategies with people of many different religions, and people of none.

On all these priorities, as well as the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative and democracy, we have sponsored practical initiatives, in difficult terrain (by definition), through our **Human Rights and Democracy Programme**. I am grateful to all – at our Posts, but also NGO partners and local civil society organisations – who worked tirelessly to implement projects in over 40 countries.

History teaches that the suppression of civil society amounts to self-harm. We must make this case, patiently but firmly, and

where necessary stand up for those who defend the human rights of others. I am proud that so many British people see that as their moral duty. But I am also proud that our country has evolved to the point where the wellbeing of others is an integral part of our **national interest**. That is why we are working so hard to ensure that the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals will be properly formulated and fully realised, leaving no one behind. And that is why we work for human rights.



Maidan activist during rally on independence square with flag, Ukraine.

CHAPTER I: Protecting Civil Society Space and Human Rights Defenders

Civil society is the human rights landscape; the space in which individuals hold rights and affect the rights of others. It includes a variety of actors, from independent and mainstream media, to community, religious and family groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), professional bodies and academia, as well as individuals. All need room to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association and religion. Given enough space, people can make informed choices, and citizens can have a say in their country's governance, culture and development.

A vibrant civil society can be a multiplier for *all* human rights, driving sustainable economic development and reinforcing good governance; and a force for stability and the rule of law. Economies and societies tend to thrive when people freely contribute ideas and **hold their governments to account**. A vigorous civil society is increasingly how nations compete in today's interconnected world, where innovation, creativity, and a dynamic "knowledge economy" confer comparative advantage.

So we focus on these issues for several good reasons: because civil society space is strategic (connected with important global trends); because we want for our international partners advantages we enjoy in the UK (we have a stake in their progress and prosperity); and because – in 2014 – civil society was under threat in many parts of the world.

The Current State of Civil Society Space

The incoming High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, spoke in praise of human rights defenders (HRDs), saying "the courageous individual is he or she who has nothing to wield but common sense, reason and the law and is prepared to forfeit future, family, friends and even life in defence of others, or to end injustice". He added that "Human rights defenders are such courageous people, and we must do everything we can to protect them, and celebrate them".

In 2014, human rights NGOs and UN bodies expressed growing concern over the repression of civil society in many parts of the world: censorship, physical threats and harassment, torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings. They also noted a worrying trend towards laws and practices designed to constrain civil society, by limiting its access to information and resources. Such laws go well beyond legitimate and necessary

regulation; and even good laws can be enforced in ways which are not compatible with international best practice, or with a country's real self-interest.

In **Russia**, a set of hastily adopted and disproportionate laws has limited the space for dissenting views, particularly in the media and on the internet. This trend is evident in other parts of the former Soviet Union too. But the phenomenon has spread more widely. Individuals in **The Gambia** can be imprisoned for up to 15 years for "publishing false information", which threatens the ability of civil society freely to express legitimate opinions. The new Protest Law in **Egypt**, and procedural shortcomings in the trials of detained activists, gave the government powers to limit disproportionately the right to freedom of expression. In **Kenya**, civil society space is shrinking, and may continue to do so under proposed legislation.

Readers of this report will find a host of other examples of how "civil society space" is feeling the squeeze, in different ways, in different places, from **Bangladesh** to **Honduras**. Sometimes the pressure is extreme (as in **Eritrea**). In other countries, as in **Fiji** and **Rwanda**, it takes the gloss off an otherwise positive trend. In all countries, however, it amounts to self-harm.

In 2014, the UK sought to counter this apparent trend in a range of ways. We worked through multilateral organisations, such as the UN and EU, to push for greater recognition of the problem. And we reinforced civil society organisations (CSOs) directly, through our Posts, programmes, and other aspects of our country work.

We don't have all the data; nor all the answers. But such was our concern that Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) ministers chose "Protecting Civil Society Space" as our theme for **Human Rights Day 2014** – See box on page 17.

Working through the UN to Protect Civil Society Space

The UK is a long-standing advocate of civil society participation at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva. One of our pledges for election to the HRC in 2013 was to maintain regular dialogue with NGOs and wider civil society.

In 2014, our support for a HRC resolution on civil society space reflected our concerns about the rising number of threats against civil society in many countries, and attempts to restrict

Case Study: Shrinking Space for Civil Society in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

The space for civil society across Eastern Europe and Central Asia has been under increasing pressure for several years. While there have been some positive developments in the region (for example in **Ukraine**, grassroots organisations are becoming more active), this year saw an accelerated deterioration. While it is difficult to be certain of the reasons, it is likely that events in Ukraine were central, with several countries in the region claiming that Western influence and civil society had played a key role in sparking unrest.

Action against civil society focused on three main areas:

Constraining NGO activity

Russia's "foreign agents" law, which requires NGOs that receive foreign donations, and engage in vaguely defined "political activities", to register as foreign agents, served as a model for other countries in the region to bring in restrictive legislation in 2014.

Azerbaijan amended its law on NGOs twice, requiring NGOs and foreign donors to register with the state and gain state approval before any activities can be carried out. In **Tajikistan**, a similar "foreign agents" bill is under consultation. **Kyrgyzstan** also tabled legislation in this area, although this has not passed into law.

Turkmenistan and **Uzbekistan** continued to have extensive restrictions on civil society. In **Kazakhstan**, maintaining space for civil society will depend on how recent legislation on freedom of expression, association and access to information is implemented.

Freedom of the media

While the media in some countries in this region continued to be ranked as partly free by Freedom House (**Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine** and **Kyrgyzstan**), 2014 saw new restrictions imposed in several other countries.

In **Belarus**, new legislation required mass media to register, with the law allowing the government to block online sites if they "publicise messages which are prohibited or limited by law". In a recent example of its use, the government blocked a number of media websites for reporting on the currency crisis on 20 December.

Freedom of the media also came under increasing stress in **Azerbaijan**, where several journalists were detained in 2014. Amongst them was investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova, whose arrest drew widespread criticism from local and

international NGOs. In December, Azerbaijan's parliament passed amendments to a media law which allow courts to shut down a media outlet receiving funding from abroad. The government used this law to close the Azerbaijani branch of Radio Free Europe on 26 December.

Journalists also came under increased pressure in **Tajikistan**, where the government used slander legislation to bring cases against independent media. The government also frequently blocked access to social media, although international news websites could be freely viewed. In **Russia**, independent media outlets came under more pressure, and a number of journalists were dismissed or physically attacked after reporting views which were not those of the state.

Dunja Mijatović, the OSCE's (Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe) Representative on Freedom of the Media, described restrictions on bloggers in **Uzbekistan** as breaching international standards on free speech. She expressed concerns that, while new legislation in **Turkmenistan** might allow more internet access, it could also limit free expression on the web.

Freedom of assembly

Freedom of assembly came under increased pressure in 2014. For example, in **Armenia** the police restricted freedom of assembly through the use of force and detention of activists. In **Belarus**, the use of preventative arrests increased, particularly in the run-up to major events – in May approximately 40 people were arrested ahead of the Ice Hockey World Championships. Freedom of assembly in **Turkmenistan** and **Uzbekistan** also remained extremely restricted.

UK actions

The UK continued to raise concerns about human rights bilaterally with the governments concerned, in multilateral fora and through other channels. For example, the FCO Minister for Europe, David Lidington, raised concerns about freedom of expression, and stressed the importance of a free media in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in his blog to mark Human Rights Day. In 2015, the UK will launch a campaign throughout the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, promoting the importance of freedom of expression and the media.

operations through administrative procedures or restrictions on funding. The text was a significant advance, including language on creating and maintaining safe environments in which civil society can act, and calling for states to ensure that domestic law does not hinder the work or endanger the safety of civil society actors. The UK also continued to speak up to defend the participation of NGO representatives at the HRC, in the face of vexatious procedural challenges.

The UK also used the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to encourage states to abide by their international human rights law obligations in respect of civil society; for example, by implementing existing domestic law or considering amendments in order to protect civil society. The UK made statements at the UPRs for all countries, including **Angola, Egypt, The Gambia** and **Fiji**. We used these opportunities

to make recommendations: on legislation pertaining to the policing of social protests; that the right to peaceful assembly in accordance with domestic and international human rights law be fully respected; and that governments' provisions for the free operation of civil society be fully implemented, including through NGO laws conforming to international standards. Some of these recommendations were accepted by the states in question, and we look forward to receiving an update on practical measures taken.

Using UK Funding to Support Civil Society

Through our overseas Posts, we fund and manage projects to protect and strengthen civil society space, and to empower citizens to participate in democratic processes. Using bilateral and dedicated funding, including the FCO's Human Rights and

Case Study: Supporting Civil Society in Responsible Reporting in Burma

One of the most important areas of reform instigated by the Burmese government since 2012 has been in relaxing media freedoms, as part of a wider opening of the space for civil society and freedom of expression. This space has been filled rapidly by vibrant new independent Burmese media. However, after 50 years of the absence of non-state newspapers, many of these new publications are on a steep learning curve regarding standards of professional journalism and responsible reporting. This is particularly true when it comes to sensitive issues such as reporting issues around religion and religious conflict.

The UK is committed to supporting the democratic reform process in Burma. We want to encourage strong and effective media, able to act as effective HRDs, in order to highlight issues of concern and stimulate constructive debate about the future of Burma. At the same time, we are concerned about a rise in prejudice and discrimination against Burma's religious minorities, with the emergence of religious nationalist groups, and an increase in hate

speech. In 2013 and 2014, there were instances where inaccurate or inadequate media coverage has fuelled inter-communal and inter-religious tensions and violence.

In 2014, the HRDP funded a project with the Religion News Service (RNS), which worked with local partners to train editors, journalists and bloggers on responsible and accurate reporting of issues around religious freedoms and faith-based conflicts. Religious leaders representing Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism shared their advice, and a network was established to help pass on new skills and knowledge. The media have an important role to play as HRDs by upholding fundamental freedoms, and ensuring their journalism is conducted accordingly.

The beneficiaries have written articles and commentary pieces demonstrating lessons learned and best practice in reporting on religious freedom and faith-based conflicts; these have been published in local and international publications, including the Washington Post and Huffington Post.

Human Rights Day, 10 December 2014

On Human Rights Day, the FCO drew attention to the pressures faced by civil society in a growing number of countries.

The Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, said:

"We call on governments around the world to do more to foster the role of civil society in promoting and defending human rights. States with strong civil societies are more stable, more prosperous and better neighbours. Civil society continues to play a crucial role in protecting and promoting human rights, and allowing citizens to hold their governments to account."

Ministerial activities

FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, hosted an event with representatives from Amnesty International UK, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and a human rights activist from **Kenya** to discuss how to protect civil society in countries where it is threatened.

Baroness Anelay said:

"The United Kingdom is absolutely committed to working with civil society to protect individuals from discrimination, violence and intimidation and to speak up – both in public and private – for those without a voice. Today I am delighted to be joined by representatives from civil society organisations to hear how they think the UK can help stem the tide of laws and procedures, in many parts of the world, which portray civil society as a threat; and how we can convince such countries that a dynamic civil society is essential for their own wellbeing."

FCO Ministers Tobias Ellwood, Hugo Swire, David Lidington and James Duddridge marked Human Rights Day by issuing [blogs](#), on the topics of, respectively: freedom of

religion or belief in the **Middle East and North Africa**; human rights in the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**; freedom of expression and the media in **Eastern Europe and Central Asia**; and preventing sexual violence and protecting civil society.

The FCO network's activities

The FCO network marked Human Rights Day with a range of activities, designed to show solidarity with civil society and HRDs whose work to promote and protect human rights is threatened. Six examples serve to illustrate the network-wide initiative.

The Head of the FCO's Human Rights Department in the UK issued a [blog](#), entitled "What is Civil Society?" Our High Commission in **India** hosted an event attended by grassroots activists, NGOs, and volunteers working in communities where Hindi is the first or only language, to launch Hindi language versions of booklets to help their understanding of the law relating to victims of sexual violence. Our office for **Libya** (in **Tunisia**) launched a social media campaign with an event attended by Wail el Gheriani, son of human rights activist Salwa Burghaisis, who was killed on 25 June. BBC Media Action produced a [short film](#) of the occasion which was shown on the Libya Office's Facebook page. In **Thailand**, our Ambassador spoke about the importance of freedom of speech in support of democracy, at an event attended by more than 200 community activists, and took questions from attendees. In **Afghanistan**, the British Ambassador spoke at a UK-sponsored event, recognising the work of HRDs and urging the government to do more to protect them. Our colleagues in **Burma** held a reception in honour of local and international press to show support for freedom of the media.

Democracy Programme (HRDP), we fund strategic projects on thematic human rights issues such as freedom of expression and democracy, which have important implications for the protection of civil society. In November 2014, the HRDP reviewed and revised its 2015-16 criteria for projects connected with freedom of expression, which now explicitly include projects designed to protect civil society space. Projects which are successful in this category will commence in April 2015.

Lifeline: the Embattled NGO Assistance Fund

In 2011, the UK joined other donors in establishing “Lifeline: the Embattled NGO Assistance Fund”. The fund aims to provide emergency assistance and advocacy grants to CSOs overseas that are facing repression and harassment because of their work in promoting and protecting human rights. Over the last three years, Lifeline has provided financial support to 468 CSOs working on human rights issues in 87 countries and, in 2014, gave grants worth more than US\$1.1 million. To date, the UK has contributed £300,000.

Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP) Fund

The DDP was established in 2012 with the help of a group of member countries of the Freedom Online Coalition, including the UK, to help organisations and individuals working to combat online threats to journalists, bloggers and HRDs. This assistance also includes emergency grants to address immediate threats to freedom of expression and internet freedom. In 2014 the UK gave the DDP €254,137, bringing our total support to £500,000.

Human Rights Defenders

Much of the work we do on strengthening the capacity of civil society overseas involves working with HRDs; those who act to protect the human rights of themselves and others, often risking their own lives and liberty to do so. They are important because of their role in documenting violations and abuses; seeking remedy or redress for victims; advocating social, political and economic changes; and educating others on human rights.

The FCO has produced a HRDs toolkit to provide advice and support to colleagues at Post in working with and assisting HRDs. The toolkit demonstrates our commitment in this area, and our determination to provide practical support. In recognition of the continuing challenges – and the increasing threats to HRDs worldwide – we are reviewing the toolkit.

In 2014, our Posts across the globe continued to support HRDs by: observing trials; visiting those imprisoned and lobbying for their release; raising concerns over their safety with authorities; providing training; funding projects; and working with EU colleagues. For example, in **Rwanda** we funded training in the professional skills necessary for HRDs to perform their roles safely. The training covered ethical research methods and advocacy skills, enabling participants to be more effective in their work in promoting and defending human rights.

Working through the EU in support of HRDs

The EU’s global work on HRDs is underpinned by the EU Guidelines on HRDs, which suggests practical means of support and assistance. An important element of the guidance is support for the Special Procedures of the HRC, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs and appropriate regional mechanisms. The UK works with its EU partners to implement the guidelines, for example through participating in EU working groups that oversee EU policy on countries and regions, and through in-country cooperation on individual cases.

The UK also contributes through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which provides dedicated funding for organisations that support HRDs in their efforts to promote and protect human rights. Approximately 90% of its beneficiaries are CSOs. The UK has encouraged the EU to remain focused on the issue of HRDs in the EIDHR.

In 2014, the UK encouraged the EU, in its forthcoming new strategic action plan, to reinforce its commitment to protecting HRDs, an area in which concerted action by the EU and its member states has the potential to be especially effective. We influenced the EU’s decision to refresh its strategy and increase support to HRDs in all parts of the world. Coordinated action through the EU was one of the ways we gave particular attention to HRDs in **Afghanistan**.

Case Study: Human Rights Defender Sombath Somphone in Laos

On 15 December 2012, the prominent civil society activist Sombath Somphone disappeared in Vientiane in Laos. Police CCTV footage showed Sombath being stopped by uniformed traffic police at a police post before being taken away by unknown individuals. Two years on, despite continued calls from the international community, no information about his whereabouts has been forthcoming.

The UK has offered technical assistance to interpret the CCTV footage, and FCO ministers and officials have raised the case with the Laos authorities on many occasions.

To mark the second anniversary of Sombath’s disappearance, FCO Minister for South East Asia, Hugo Swire, tweeted: “Now two years

since the disappearance of #Sombath in #Laos, his friends and family are still waiting for answers, as are we”. In addition, staff at the British Embassy in Vientiane attended the 2014 **Participatory Development Training Centre Fair**, organised to mark the second anniversary of the disappearance of its founder, Sombath.

In January 2015, Laos will undergo its Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council, at which the UK will recommend that Laos respond to calls from the international community, including three UN Special Rapporteurs, by establishing a thorough, transparent and impartial investigation into Sombath’s disappearance.

Case Study: Working in support of HRDs in Afghanistan

The UK attaches great importance to the role of HRDs across the world. The situation in Afghanistan presents an especially challenging working environment for HRDs, in particular for women. Our wider work on women's rights and the Department for International Development's (DFID) funding on Violence Against Women works to support additional challenges faced by female HRDs in Afghan domestic society.

Our overall goal is to promote human rights and the legitimate role of civil society, which we believe is crucial for sustainable development, democracy and the rule of law. Building a resilient civil society that can operate effectively in a safe political space is the long-term aim. However, there are immediate protective measures necessary to achieve that and to enhance security for individuals.

UK support to the EU+ Member States Strategy on HRDs in Afghanistan

Our approach to HRDs in Afghanistan is to work with and through international partners, in particular the EU and the UN, and through UK bilateral action and targeted funding. Experience shows that we maximise our chances of success when we pull together with international partners, rather than acting in isolation. The EU+ Local Strategy, which we encouraged, offers an opportunity for greater coherence and strengthened coordination of international action. We will continue to work with the EU and member states to coordinate efforts, and will consult civil society, in the UK and Afghanistan, for feedback and updates on progress.

We will continue to make a significant contribution to the protection of HRDs in Afghanistan, playing an active part through this strategy and through our bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. We will focus our actions where we believe we can have the most practical impact on the ground.

We must do this with an acute awareness of the challenging security environment. Our actions will be ambitious but realistic. In our actions, the safety of HRDs and other human rights actors is of utmost concern.

UK support to HRDs in Afghanistan will be sustained long after international combat forces leave Afghanistan. We remain committed to supporting and encouraging the Afghan government to fulfil its international human rights obligations. We take a gender-sensitive approach, recognising the need for particular awareness when working with Afghan society.

How the UK supports HRDs in Afghanistan

Protection mechanisms:

- > using public communications, including events and social media, to raise awareness of the value of HRDs, and highlight safety issues. Support joint lobbying and démarches on cases;
- > lobbying for relevant laws or guidelines and other practices that increase protection of HRDs. For example, the UK provides strategic support to the Ministry of the Interior, including its gender unit. We support the EU Police Mission (EUPOL) and the UN Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), who are working to implement the "Strategy for the Management of the Affairs of Afghan National Police Female Personnel". This will help Afghan women to access female police staff;

- > maintaining regular contact with HRDs, particularly women: inviting HRDs to events and meetings to discuss concerns; visiting HRDs in provinces, where security conditions permit; and including activities and meetings with Afghan civil society in relevant ministerial visit programmes;
- > reporting on prominent trials and visiting HRDs in detention, where we have access, and it is appropriate to do so;
- > emergency funding through the multi-donor Lifeline: the Embattled NGO Assistance Fund, via the US Embassy in Kabul; and
- > supporting EU coordination on mapping existing safe houses, and exploring the possibilities of a 24/7 hotline and identification of individuals for the proposed HRD database.

Communication and networking:

- > continuing to mainstream human rights, including HRDs, into the work of the British Embassy in Kabul; and ensuring that appropriate Embassy officials attend FCO training on human rights, which includes how to work with HRDs;
- > attending and actively participating in the bi-monthly EU+ Human Rights and Gender Working Group; supporting the continued commitment on HRDs in the EU Country Strategy and Action Plan for Afghanistan (2014-2016); and ensuring that HRDs are on the agenda of Heads of Mission meetings and EU+ representative meetings with the Afghan leadership; and
- > supporting EU coordination on identifying HRD focal points in all provinces, and mapping European organisations to link with HRDs.


Working through the UN:

- > maintaining support for UNAMA's work to monitor and take protective action on the situation of HRDs. We will do this through support to UN resolutions, political support in-country, and our funding to the UN;
- > supporting continued language from the UN Declaration on HRDs in the UN General Assembly resolution on Afghanistan;
- > supporting EU lobbying for a standing invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs; and
- > encouraging the Afghan government to implement the recommendations concerning HRDs accepted during Afghanistan's UPR.

Building capability:

We will continue to use UK funding for projects with HRDs, the Afghan government, and other Afghan institutions to support an improved operating environment for HRDs. For example:

- > support to increase the capacity of the Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee to monitor and campaign for a safer working environment for journalists and media workers;
- > DFID support for the Tawanmandi Programme to Strengthen Afghan Civil Society, which includes support to human rights organisations; and
- > support to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission for its efforts to promote and protect human rights, including supporting HRDs.

A person wearing a red shirt is holding a stack of booklets. The top booklet is titled "International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict". The cover features a graphic of a window with a grid pattern. In the background, a conference is taking place with several people, including a man in a grey suit and a woman in a red top. The scene is lit with warm, ambient lighting.

*International Protocol
on the Documentation
and Investigation of
Sexual Violence in
Conflict*

CHAPTER II: The Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative

2014 marked two years since the launch of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI). We have made considerable progress in ensuring greater international attention and action on this issue in those two years. But the recent reporting of horrific acts of sexual violence, most recently from the Middle East, within the context of armed conflict, demonstrates just how much more there is to do. Securing the widest possible international consensus on this issue has been a firm objective from the start. This is important, both to make clear to perpetrators that governments around the world will no longer allow their crimes to go unchallenged, and also so that victims and survivors feel acknowledged and supported by the international community.

In 2014, we continued to build support for the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, launched with the Under-Secretary General and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mrs Zainab Hawa Bangura, during the 68th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2013. 155 states have now endorsed the declaration – 80% of UN member states – a remarkable reflection of the strength of support for the urgent need to address this issue, and the shared commitment to doing so. In September, Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for Conflict Issues, James Duddridge, co-hosted with the SRSG a meeting at the UN to look at global progress in the 12 months since the declaration's launch.

The declaration has a clear focus on tackling impunity and promoting accountability for crimes of sexual violence committed in conflict. But it also contains a set of wider political and practical commitments, based around four areas. These four areas were also the focus for discussions at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, hosted by Mr Hague, and the Special Envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Angelina Jolie, in London in June 2014. This helped ensure that the summit discussions and their subsequent outcomes contributed to implementing the declaration.

These same areas have also provided the framework for the UK's practical PSVI work throughout 2014.

- (1) *Strengthening accountability and tackling impunity through stronger national and international justice, and improved documentation and investigation of sexual violence crimes.*

Addressing impunity for sexual violence in conflict requires more effective delivery of justice at all levels. To meet this challenge, we have worked to improve the capacity and capability of the judiciary, police, magistrates, prosecutors, advocates and lawyers, and to strengthen national, regional and international justice systems.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, we funded the non-governmental organisation (NGO) *TRIAL* to make obtaining free legal assistance and filing claims for compensation easier for survivors. We also funded the launch of a helpline for survivors, run by the NGO *Medica Zenica*, so that both women and men can have immediate access to local expert help and assistance.

The Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict

In June 2014, William Hague and the UNHCR Special Envoy, Angelina Jolie, hosted the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. The summit was a platform to bring together the world's leading experts with its top decision-makers to address these issues. Two years on from the launch of PSVI, the summit was an opportunity to reflect on progress achieved so far. It also helped identify the necessary further practical actions by governments and others to deliver fundamental and long-lasting change. The summit departed from the standard format where states develop policy in private, without the direct involvement of experts and practitioners. Instead, events were designed to open up the debate, allow the widest participation possible and, in recognition of their critical contribution to decision-making, give particular prominence to the voices of survivors. The Summit Fringe and other public events were a means to bring civil society and the public into the policy-making process. Through our network of diplomatic missions around the world, it allowed us to engage otherwise unheard voices from around the globe in this campaign. Holding a summit on this scale with such high-level attendance and profile represented a major step forward in international efforts to tackle sexual violence in conflict. It helped break the taboo surrounding the issue, and focus international attention as a matter of urgency. A full report on the summit is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summit-report-the-global-summit-to-end-sexual-violence-in-conflict-june-2014>

In **Burma**, we funded a project that works to raise awareness of sexual violence within communities and to improve women's access to justice. In **Colombia**, we supported a programme, run by the NGO *Dejusticia*, which provides a capacity-building programme on sexual violence issues for prosecutors in the Attorney General's Office.

We also deployed members of the UK Team of PSVI Experts to the **Syrian borders** to train Syrian human rights defenders (HRDs) in documenting reports of sexual violence: to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** to support the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) training of the judiciary on sexual violence crimes; and to the Panzi Hospital in eastern **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** to support local health, legal and law enforcement professionals in documenting crimes of sexual violence, and providing assistance and support to survivors.

This country-level activity is reinforced by our work to strengthen the capacity of the international courts and tribunals to prosecute crimes of sexual violence in conflict. In December, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, launched a new Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes Policy for her office. This policy, the first of its kind for an international court or tribunal, will help ensure the effective investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based crimes. The UK has been a strong and consistent advocate of the prosecutor's work, most recently at the ICC Assembly of States Parties. At this assembly, the FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, co-hosted a panel event with **Sweden** to promote the implementation of this policy. We have also continued to encourage more states to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute of the ICC, and to enact relevant domestic legislation to help increase accountability and challenge impunity for sexual violence crimes.

One of the major challenges to addressing the culture of impunity is the lack of effective investigation and documentation of such crimes. At the summit, Mr Hague and UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie launched the new **International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict**. The UK has developed the protocol over the last two years, in collaboration with gender and sexual violence experts drawn from medical, legal, security, human rights and humanitarian fields from around the world. The protocol brings together basic standards of best practice to support national and international justice and human rights practitioners to document sexual violence effectively as a crime under international law. It sets out methods for ensuring that information obtained by documenters is gathered sensitively and comprehensively; that the organisation of the information gathered is coherent and it is stored safely; and that the material is gathered with integrity and professionalism. To ensure that the views and experiences of local practitioners were reflected in the protocol, we carried out a number of field testing and regional consultations in the **DRC, Colombia, Uganda, and Bosnia and Herzegovina**, and with London-based survivor networks, in early 2014.

Since its launch at the summit, we have encouraged widespread implementation of the protocol. We have translated it into French, Spanish, Bosnian and Arabic, and

are developing a set of training materials to support its use. Working with NGOs, we have also set up the first tranche of protocol training programmes, including in the **DRC, Nepal and Bosnia and Herzegovina**.

(2) *Providing greater support, assistance and reparation for survivors, including child survivors, of sexual violence*

Ensuring a survivor-centred approach that provides both protection and services to survivors of sexual violence in conflict was a key commitment of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. This was reinforced by the Call To Action to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Emergencies, launched by the Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, in November 2013. This involved donors, humanitarian agencies and NGOs committing to take action to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, and other at-risk groups, from the start of humanitarian emergencies. It helps fulfil the aim set out in the declaration by mobilising the humanitarian community to address the many forms of gender-based violence in all types of emergency, including sexual violence in conflict situations.

At the summit, the **Libyan** government committed funding to implement a decree that recognises that victims of sexual violence in conflict and their families are entitled to benefits, including health care, scholarships, and rehabilitation. The UK announced £6 million to support survivors of sexual violence – £4.25 million to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, £1 million to the ICC's Trust Fund for Victims, and £750,000 to the International Organisation for Migration. As part of a wider package of commitments, the United States committed to doubling, to US\$1 million, its funding for the US State Department's Gender-based Violence Emergency Response and Protection Initiative. This provides urgent assistance to survivors threatened with gender-based violence. The United States also launched an accountability initiative, which will help survivors secure justice and build the capacity of partner governments to prosecute sexual violence crimes in conflict-affected countries. In addition, it announced the expansion of the Safe from the Start initiative, which supports humanitarian organisations to prevent and respond to gender-based violence at the onset of a disaster or a conflict, with a new funding opportunity for NGOs.

These announcements have been supported by UK work at country level. We have provided basic hygiene kits and clothing to approximately 2,000 survivors of sexual violence in **Somalia**. We have also funded two local NGOs in **Colombia**: *LIMPAL* (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and *Casa Amazonía*, to provide psychosocial and legal support to survivors. Members of the UK Team of PSVI Experts have deployed to **Kosovo** to deliver training to the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims, which provides access to rehabilitation for survivors. See also "Case Study: the Girl Summit – Ending Female Genital Mutilation and Child, Early and Forced Marriage" on page 58 for further information on the UK government's work on child survivors.



UNHCR Special Envoy and Former Foreign Secretary William Hague at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

(3) *Ensuring sexual and gender-based violence responses and the promotion of gender equality are fully integrated into all peace and security efforts, including security and justice sector reform*

Military forces are a critical partner in the prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict. They are often one of the first responders when sexual violence occurs, given their access to up-to-date information about security events unavailable to civilians. However, they are not always properly equipped, trained, nor, at times, willing to deal with sexual violence crimes. In a number of cases, they may also be the perpetrators. At the summit, senior military participants were invited to discuss how to incorporate the existing provisions of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, including those on sexual violence, into military planning and the conduct of operations; the need for more robust reporting on sexual violence; how to integrate international humanitarian and human rights law into military training; and how to enforce existing initiatives on conduct and discipline. The summit also discussed how best to empower peacekeepers with the skills and capabilities to prevent and respond when sexual violence takes place, as part of their wider responsibilities under a Protection of Civilians mandate.

The commitment of those at the summit to addressing these issues was reflected in the subsequent launch by the **DRC** government of an Action Plan for the Congolese Army. The plan aims to strengthen and increase the visibility of military justice, and improve victim and witness protection. The DRC President has also appointed a personal representative on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment to oversee this and wider work.

During 2014, we worked with a number of British military training missions to build their capacity to train third countries' forces to tackle sexual violence in conflict. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, we supported the development of training modules for the Bosnian Peace Support Operations Training Centre. The centre has so far trained over 100 military personnel, who may be deployed on overseas operations, in preventing sexual violence. The training modules will now be used to train NATO and peacekeeping forces. We also funded two courses, developed by the British Peace Support Team (Eastern Africa), on preventing and responding to sexual violence for African Union (AU) peacekeeping personnel. In addition, we deployed members of the UK PSVI Team of Experts, as part of the EU Training Mission, to deliver training to the **Malian** military. This focused on their obligations to protect civilians and respond to instances of sexual violence. We provided funding to an NGO in **South Sudan**, which provides coaching, protection and accompaniment for Women's Peacekeeping Teams.

(4) *Improving international strategic cooperation to deliver a more effective multilateral response*

In conflict and post-conflict situations, where national authorities can be weak and poorly resourced, the international community can play a critical part in supporting national efforts to address sexual violence in conflict. Many of the multilateral and regional institutions have developed, or are developing, strategies and plans to tackle sexual violence in conflict, or are supporting governments to do so. For example, the National Action Plan for addressing sexual violence presented at the summit by the Federal Government of **Somalia**, developed with the backing and support of the UN,



and the announcement by the government of **South Sudan** and the UN following the summit to develop a similar initiative.

Throughout 2014, we continued to work with and support a range of multilateral agencies to strengthen their responses to sexual violence in conflict. To date, we have provided £1 million to the Office of the SRSO, and £150,000 to the UN Office of the SRSO on Children and Armed Conflict. At the summit, a number of other governments announced new financial support to the UN's work, including **Finland's** €2 million and **Bahrain's** US\$100,000 to the UN Fund for Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the **United Arab Emirates'** US\$1 million to the Office of the SRSO.

We also provided approximately £800,000 to the AU's Gender, Peace and Security Programme, which includes supporting the work of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. The AU has recently deployed a team of sexual violence experts to the **Central African Republic** to provide support to victims of sexual violence in the districts of Paoua, Kaga-Bandoro and Bambar. Following the summit, we worked within the EU to integrate sexual violence issues within Common Security and Defence Policy missions and EU development activity more effectively, and encouraged greater EU support, including financial, for HRDs. We are also working to strengthen NATO's focus on the issue. At the NATO Summit in September, Mr Hague hosted a meeting on the Women, Peace and Security agenda with the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, Mari Skåre. This was the first discussion on this issue ever to take place during a NATO Summit. It delivered a strong message of support to the Special Representative regarding her plans to ensure women's participation in conflict resolution. The prevention of sexual violence in conflict is reflected in wider NATO activity.

CHAPTER III: Human Rights in Action

Every day, our network of overseas Posts and government departments in the UK takes action to improve respect for human rights and protect individuals at risk. Most of this work is an integral part of delivering our security, prosperity and consular objectives – none of which could succeed in isolation. Consequently, most of our staff carry out work involving human rights. And many of our programmes have a human rights element to them. But we also continue to deliver dedicated human rights work through projects funded by the Human Rights and Democracy Programme (HRDP), the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's (FCO) strategic response to promoting our human rights priorities in countries around the world. In 2014 we supported more than 80 human rights projects in over 40 countries worldwide.

In order to provide the Foreign Secretary with the best possible information about the human rights dimension to our foreign policy and actions we can take, the Advisory Group on Human Rights continued to meet during 2014. The FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, and her predecessor, Baroness Warsi, also chaired meetings of the four thematic sub-groups of the advisory group (abolition of the death penalty, torture prevention, freedom of expression on the internet, and freedom of religion or belief). Since its establishment in 2010, the advisory group, and its sub-groups, have all provided useful advice and a challenge function on the steps we take.

The Department for International Development (DFID) has also mainstreamed human rights into its programmes – the realisation of all human rights underpins sustainable development. Examples of DFID's human rights work are highlighted throughout this report. This chapter details some of the main achievements in 2014.

Mainstreaming Human Rights across the FCO Network

To make maximum progress on our human rights priorities, and to help ensure this work goes hand-in-hand with other components of our national interest, we took a number of measures to ramp up our internal communications and training during 2014. These included:

- > launching in January a monthly human rights **bulletin** for FCO staff whose work includes human rights. This summarises key developments, "curates" examples of best practice from across the network, and highlights events and deadlines for the coming month;



Picture: Scott Wallace / World Bank
A woman breaks apart bricks in Bangladesh.

- > holding a human rights **network conference** in April for over 150 FCO staff who work on human rights. This included master classes on how to promote human rights overseas, and panel discussions with FCO and external experts;
- > producing a series of one-page **guidance** notes on various aspects of human rights work, e.g. "How to Promote and Protect the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief", "How to do Human Rights at Post", "How to Work with Human Rights Defenders at Post" and "How to do Business and Human Rights at Post";
- > running a session for over 40 ambassadors at the FCO's annual **leadership conference** on the relationship between human rights, security and prosperity;
- > setting up a series of human rights "action learning hubs" and "**surgeries**" for staff wanting guidance on issues such as working on human rights at geographical desks, or how to work with implementers to put together effective bids for the HRDP;
- > re-vamping our internal **websites** on human rights and setting up an internal discussion forum on human rights issues; and
- > refreshing our **foundation course** on human rights, which trained approximately 120 staff in 2014.

We have also continued to run our human rights practitioner course, which trained approximately 32 key human rights staff in 2014, and our programme of religious literacy (see "Freedom of Religion or Belief" on page 51 for further details on the latter).

In addition, we have been working to shape the human rights component for the FCO's new Diplomatic Academy, which will launch in 2015. This approach will target both "foundation" and "practitioner" levels, through innovative learning methods and a digital platform, making it available to the FCO global network.

FCO Spend on Democracy and Human Rights

Because we mainstream human rights and democracy work across the network (for the practical and policy reasons above), it is difficult to calculate an exact figure for what the FCO spends annually on human rights work. The FCO delegates budgets to geographical and thematic directorates, which then delegate to departments and overseas posts, which in turn set their own detailed budgets. The total spending on human rights activity in the FCO includes staff time, project work, and bilateral funds across a wide range of these budgets. However, following requests from the Foreign Affairs Committee, we have identified the following figures from financial year 2013-14, which add up to £38.2 million in total:

- > HRDP: £6.5 million;
- > approximate amount from Arab Partnership Fund spent on democracy and human rights: £5.5 million;
- > grant-in-aid funding to Westminster Foundation for Democracy: £3.5 million;
- > Human Rights and Democracy Department administration and bilateral programme: £340,000; and
- > roughly 240 full-time equivalents in the FCO working on human rights: approximately £22.4 million.

The Human Rights and Democracy Programme Fund

The HRDP is the FCO's dedicated annual fund supporting human rights and democracy work overseas. Through targeted projects, it aims to promote our priority themes and lift the capacity of governments and civil society to promote and protect human rights.

Our Embassies and High Commissions work closely with civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses and governments to deliver HRDP projects. An underlying objective of the HRDP is to promote the development of local CSOs. Therefore, even when we work with international implementers, we strongly encourage them to work with local partners.

In the financial year 2014-15, we allocated approximately £5.5 million of funding to support 75 projects in over 40 countries; 24 of these projects are multi-year and continued from 2013-14.

In 2014, the HRDP continued with previous years' eight target areas, aligned with the FCO's human rights priorities. By focusing our efforts in this way, we believe we achieve greater impact. The areas were:

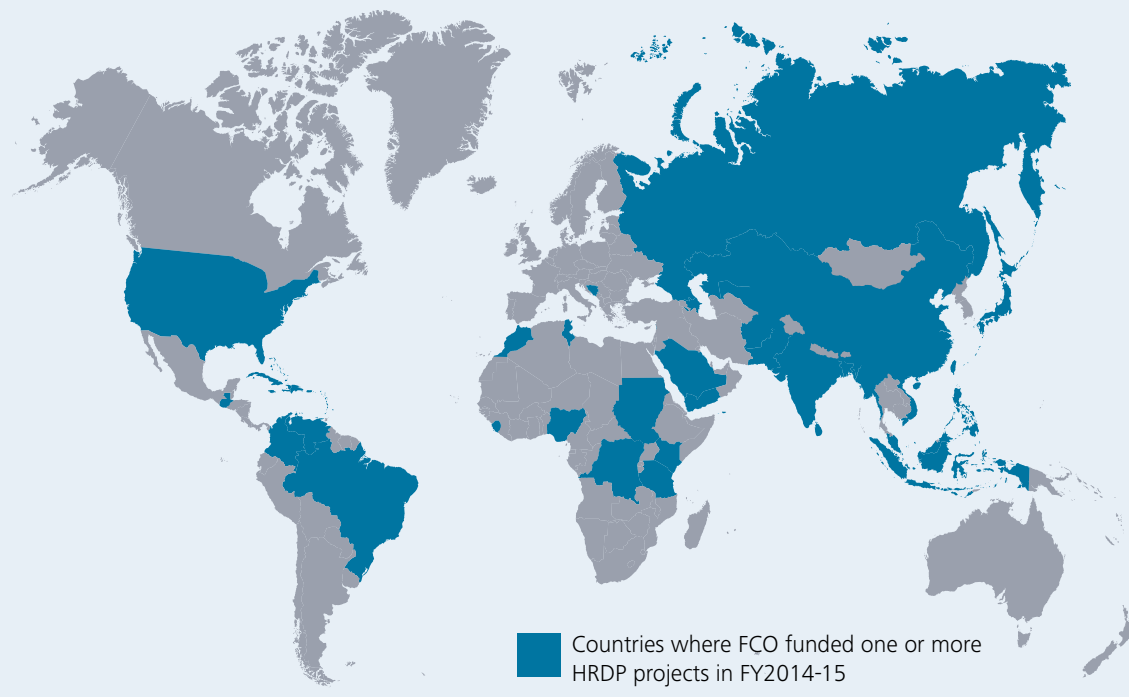
- > promoting women's rights;
- > preventing sexual violence in conflict;
- > global torture prevention;
- > freedom of religion or belief;
- > freedom of expression;
- > democratic processes;

At a glance: our 2014-15 Human Rights and Democracy Projects



At a glance: the geographical spread of our 2014-15 Human Rights and Democracy Programme projects

In 2014–15, the FCO is spending approximately £5.5 million in support of more than 70 human rights projects in over 40 countries worldwide*. 24 of those projects are multi-year and have continued from FY2013-14.



*NB: this map does not include any sensitive or multi-country projects

- > business and human rights; and
- > abolition of the death penalty.

Countries of focus

HRDP projects complement the human rights work of individual British Embassies or High Commissions across the globe. Our designated HRDP priority countries are those where we actively encourage project bids; these are countries which:

- > are one of the FCO's countries of human rights concern or country case studies; and/or,
- > offer particular opportunities to promote and protect human rights for one or more of our thematic priorities.

Examples of HRDP-funded projects can be found throughout this report. Below are some case studies of work the programme has supported in 2014.

Promoting women's rights

Against the otherwise positive backdrop of **Tunisia's** successful 2014 elections, local civil society remains deeply polarised. As a result of these tensions, women's CSOs often struggle to interact and cooperate, despite their similar goals. To address this, in 2014 HRDP funded the NGO Search for

Common Ground to work with Islamist and secularist women's CSOs to promote a culture of cooperative dialogue on legal reform and other women's rights issues. The project led to the expansion and diversification of an existing women's dialogue coalition, Tunisian Women for Common Ground, and the organisation of regional events to promote dialogue on women's rights. The project also supported a targeted legal advocacy campaign to reduce discrimination against women, and increase female parity in senior decision-making positions in the public sector.

Preventing sexual violence in conflict

A key theme for the HRDP in 2014 was the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), with approximately 36% of funding in 2014-15 being targeted at 16 PSVI projects in 12 countries, including: **Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burma, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Guatemala, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sierra Leone.** This relatively high proportion of spending reflects the former Foreign Secretary's commitment, in the G8 Declaration on PSVI in April 2013, to spend £5 million over three years on grassroots PSVI projects through the HRDP. As a result, we were able to support 20 PSVI projects between



Picture: Department for International Development
 Syrian refugee children in a Lebanese school classroom. The UK is supporting efforts to get Syrian refugee children back into school, both inside Syria, and in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan – to help prevent a lost generation. The conflict in Syria has displaced millions of people inside the country, and over 3 million Syrians have become refugees – more than half of whom are children.

2013 and 2015, and are on track to meet the £5 million target in 2015.

An example of one of these successful projects is in the **DRC**, jointly implemented by the Province of the Anglican Church of Congo and Tearfund. It aims to reduce the incidence and impact of sexual violence in conflict-affected areas of eastern DRC, an area with one of the highest levels of sexual violence in the country. Since the project began, 75 church leaders in North and South Kivu have received training to increase their knowledge about sexual violence issues and their role in promoting justice for survivors. All agreed to include such teaching in their future church activities. Another key output of this project is Tearfund's "survivor mapping" exercise, which looks to understand the needs and priorities of survivors of sexual violence in the region. This work will be reflected in the report "If I Speak Out", to be launched in March 2015.

Global torture prevention

One of our primary torture prevention projects is a multi-year (2013-15) project run by the Geneva-based Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) to support national initiatives to prevent torture in fourteen countries. This project aims to encourage states to sign and ratify the Convention against Torture (CAT) and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT), and to develop effective National Preventative Mechanisms (NPMs) mandated by the OPCAT. In 2014, one of the key achievements was **Morocco's** ratification of the OPCAT in November. As a result, Morocco is required to develop and designate its NPM by 24 December 2015. Ratification creates legal obligations and sends a strong signal about a country's commitment to preventing torture. It also establishes constructive dialogue on torture prevention between domestic and international experts.

Freedom of religion or belief

In financial year 2014-15, the HRDP funded several projects across South East Asia that focused on promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief.

In **Indonesia** we funded a project to enhance the role of the judiciary in protecting religious minority groups. In early 2015, the implementer, ELSAM, will train over 100 Indonesian judges on human rights standards concerning freedom of religion and belief. At the end of the project, the training materials will be integrated into the Supreme Court internal training program.

We also funded a project with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, focused on **Burma** and **Indonesia**, to build relationships between religious freedom activists in both countries, sharing their experiences and common challenges. The project has provided training for these activists, by equipping them to share information, advocate effectively for religious freedom, and identify solutions to religious intolerance in both countries.

Supporting freedom of expression

For **Russia** in 2014, the pressure on the media community and freedom of expression increased as new restrictive media legislation was introduced. Through ARTICLE 19, a London-based international NGO, we funded a project to help protect and promote freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including on the internet, by improving the digital, physical and legal safety and protection of Russian journalists and bloggers. Using a holistic approach to protection, eight professional journalists and bloggers were taught how to carry out risk assessments, create security plans, stay informed of relevant changes to Russian media legislation, and use software and techniques to protect themselves and their information digitally. As there is limited availability of materials regarding digital and physical security in Russian, the project developed and produced a package of Russian language materials as part of follow-up "peer to peer" training sessions. The project also supported ARTICLE 19's successful advocacy work, notably around the re-opening of the case of murdered Dagestani journalist Akhmednabi Akhmednabiyev in September 2014, whose case had been suspended by local authorities in July 2014. In the long term, this project aims to improve the ability of journalists and bloggers to carry out their work with confidence, and to increase the availability of balanced information and analysis from independent online media sources.

Strengthening democracy

An ongoing challenge in the public administration system of **Uzbekistan** relates to transparency and accountability of local and central government. In 2014, the HRDP funded the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to work on improving citizens' access to public information, and the accountability of local government. The project was timed to coincide with transparency legislation currently passing through parliament in Uzbekistan. The project has trained approximately 200 employees, a quarter of whom were women, of Information Centres in the Tashkent Province, in order to develop their ability to: communicate effectively with citizens, CSOs and mass media; improve access to public information; and ensure

transparency of local government activities. Working with the Academy of Public Administration under the Office of the President of Uzbekistan, the implementer also held a series of workshops with local government employees in pilot areas, including Tashkent and Namangan Provinces. These focused on accountability issues, local budget oversight, and how to coordinate better with civil society on issues such as regional development.

Business and human rights

In **Colombia**, we continued to build on our relationship with the Colombian government, companies and civil society in order to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). We did this by funding a project in 2013-14 to support the development of Colombia's National Action Plan. The implementer, Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP), worked with the government to develop a draft chapter on business and human rights within Colombia's Integrated Public Strategy on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. This draft led to the creation of public policy guidelines on business and human rights. FIP also partnered with the Procuraduría General (Office of the Attorney General) to develop an administrative directive that tasked all public officials to implement the UNGPs, together with sanctions for non-compliance. These projects support the long-term goal of improved operation and working conditions for thousands in the extractive industries in Colombia.

Abolition of the death penalty

Ten countries in the Commonwealth Caribbean region retain the death penalty in their laws, and capital punishment commands wide popular support. No execution has taken place in the region since 2008, but lack of movement towards abolition hinders worldwide progress, and this bloc of countries consistently votes against UN General Assembly resolutions calling for a moratorium on the death penalty. Civil society activists in the region are few and far between, with limited resources and ability to coordinate campaigns or lobbying efforts. To address this, the FCO supported the creation of a regional not-for-profit organisation, Greater Caribbean for Life, to direct and support the work of the Caribbean abolitionist movement. The FCO funded this organisation in 2013-14 and 2014-15. Funding in 2013-14 enabled the launch of the network in October 2013 at the Second Greater Caribbean Conference against the Death Penalty in Trinidad. FCO funding in 2014-15 worked to strengthen the network further by supporting Caribbean activists with training and material, and to mobilise further support for abolition. The network has undertaken speaking engagements across the Caribbean, including prominent United States death penalty activists, and has increased debate on local media programmes and print outlets.

Financial year 2015-16

Project proposals are considered annually by the HRDP Programme Board through a competitive bidding process. The bidding round for 2015-16 projects was launched on 4 November at an event at the FCO hosted by the FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay. Over 80 representatives

from potential implementers, and relevant FCO staff, attended the event. It included a speech from Baroness Anelay, and a master class on putting together an effective bid. All materials and further information about the bidding round, which runs from November 2014 to March 2015, are available on our HRDP webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/human-rights-and-democracy-programme>. The event was complemented by the online publication of the new HRDP pamphlet, also available on our webpage.

Projects for 2015-16 will begin in April 2015.

Measurement and Evaluation of Human Rights Work

Human rights work is usually a case of long-term, incremental change, and a great deal of the progress we seek to achieve depends on the actions of other governments. However, the FCO makes serious efforts to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of our human rights work, and to adjust our approach in light of evidence gathered.

Monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of the HRDP. All projects have clearly defined purposes, outputs and outcomes, with quarterly monitoring and financial reports to track project delivery, and a completion report setting out what has been achieved at the end of the project. Effective project monitoring helps our Embassies, High Commissions and the London HRDP team assess the impact of projects against their objectives, identify lessons learned, and test value for money; this then helps to inform future project decisions.

The HRDP also aims to carry out in-depth project evaluations of approximately 10% of completed projects each year. In 2014, we evaluated eight projects with a total combined budget of approximately £496,000. These covered three projects in **Colombia** (one each on business and human rights, protecting women's rights, and strengthening democracy), two democracy strengthening projects in **Zimbabwe**, two business and human rights projects in **Kenya**, and one freedom of expression project in **Zambia**. These will be published online, along with existing evaluations, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/project-evaluation-documents>.

The Department for International Development's Work on Economic and Social Rights

The realisation of all human rights underpins sustainable development. Through its development programmes, the UK supports civil society and governments to build open economies and open societies in which citizens have freedom, dignity, choice, and control over their lives. UK Aid also works to ensure that all people, including women and girls, the persistently poor, ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups, can take advantage of economic opportunity without barriers.

In 2014, DFID continued to implement a range of programmes that protect and promote human rights. Some of these are highlighted throughout this report, for example on strengthening the rule of law, promoting democratic governance, and security, peace and justice. The following

section sets out DFID's major achievements from the beginning of its operational plan commitments in 2010-11 up to the most recent published results in mid-2014.

Girls and women

DFID has put girls and women at the heart of international development. The Strategic Vision for Girls and Women aims to empower girls and women to have voice, choice and control over their lives. To achieve this, DFID is working to build an enabling environment for girls and women including by: addressing discriminatory social norms that underpin how girls and women are valued in society; supporting girls' completion of primary and secondary education; supporting the economic empowerment of women, including through access to financial services; ensuring girls and women can live free from violence, including by accessing security and justice through the courts, police and legal assistance; and supporting universal sexual and reproductive health and right for all girls and women, including enabling more women to use modern methods of family planning and ensuring more births are attended by skilled birth attendants. From 2011-14, DFID provided at least 26.9 million women with access to financial services and helped 4.9 million girls access primary and lower secondary education. One example of DFID's work is the flagship Girls' Education Challenge (GEC), which will enable up to one million of the world's most marginalised girls to complete at least one full cycle of schooling. To date, 37 GEC projects have been supported across 18 countries. See also the section on The Girl Summit in Chapter VI for further information on the UK government's work on girls.

Health

Every year, around seven million children under five die needlessly, from malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other infectious diseases. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth kill 800 women every day, according to figures from the World Health Organisation. DFID's work focuses on funding the provision of good-quality, cost-effective, basic health services by public, private and NGO providers to provide access for the poorest. From 2011 to 2014, DFID helped 4.9 million additional women to use modern methods of family planning, ensured that 3.6 million births were delivered with the help of nurses, midwives or doctors, distributed 50 million insecticide-treated bed nets, and immunised 40.6 million children against preventable diseases. This has included 890,000 additional users of modern methods of family planning in **Bangladesh** and, in **Pakistan**, 700,000 births attended by a skilled birth attendant.

Education

Education enables people to live healthier and more productive lives, allowing them to fulfil their own potential, as well as to strengthen and contribute to open, inclusive and economically vibrant societies. Yet more than 58 million children are still out of school, of which 31 million are girls, and at least 250 million children cannot read or count, even if they have spent four years in school. DFID's focus is for children not only to be in school, but also to be learning. Between 2011 and 2014, DFID supported 10.2 million children in primary and lower secondary

school; the highest numbers of children supported were in **Ethiopia** (2.8 million), **India** (1.4 million) and **South Sudan** (1.2 million).

Water and sanitation

Across the world, 2.5 billion people do not have access to sanitation, and 700 million people do not have access to clean water. Inadequate access to water and sanitation is the principal cause of diarrhoeal disease, which kills 1,600 children every day, and is the leading killer of children under five in Africa. In 2012, the UK recognised the right to sanitation as an element of the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, as provided for under Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This is the same basis under which the UK recognised the right to water in 2006. From 2011 to 2014, DFID provided 14.8 million people with sustainable access to clean drinking water, and 14.5 million people with sustainable access to improved sanitation. In **Bangladesh**, for example, DFID worked with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the government on a national programme to provide arsenic-safe water and improved sanitation facilities, and promote improved hygiene. The programme led to 6.5 million people benefitting from latrines, and 1.89 million people gaining access to safe water.

Economic empowerment

Around 839 million people are in "working poverty", defined as living under US\$2 a day, predominantly in Africa and Asia. Vulnerable employment continues to affect women more than men (according to 2014 International Labour Organisation figures) and women are more than twice as likely as men to be out of the labour force altogether (according to 2014 World Bank figures). Economic development and growth is the main driver of long-term poverty reduction through the creation of more and better jobs, which result in higher incomes. More inclusive growth, particularly for girls and women, also requires action to tackle the structural barriers that deny various social groups the chance to raise their incomes and find jobs. This includes improving access to finance, ownership of assets, and employment opportunities. Between 2011 and 2014, DFID improved access to financial services for 54.4 million people, of whom 49% were women. In **Kenya**, access to financial services was extended to an additional 12.4 million people in 2013-14 alone, including five million women.

CHAPTER IV: Democracy

The UK believes that democracy offers the best system of government for protecting human rights, guaranteeing the rule of law, supporting economic development and preventing conflict. Protecting and promoting democracy is at the heart of our values agenda.

2014 saw serious challenges to democracy in many countries and regions across the globe. Examples included **Ukraine**, increasing pressure on civil society space in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and a military coup in Thailand. But there were positive developments that included free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections in **Tunisia**, and **Fiji's** first election following a military coup in 2006.

These events took place in the context of a perceived decline in democracy across the globe in recent years. Freedom House's global report on civil and political rights, "Freedom in the World 2014", concluded that freedom had declined for the

eight consecutive years in 2013. However, the same study also concluded that a majority (65%) of the global population lived in countries designated by the report as either "free" or "partly free".

UK approach to democracy strengthening

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) does not seek to promote one particular model of democracy over another. Challenges to democracy are specific to each state, so we tailor our approach accordingly, taking into account context and needs. We encourage our diplomatic network to include support for democracy as part of their work. The tools at their disposal for doing so include diplomatic engagement with governments, parliaments, members of the public and civil society, and project funding under the FCO Human Rights and Democracy Programme (HRDP), the Arab Partnership Fund, or

Case Study: Military Coup in Thailand

The May 2014 coup was the 19th since 1932; the last being in 2006. The military maintain that it was necessary to preserve national security, following months of anti-government protests. Most international observers disagree, noting that the security situation in Thailand was not severe enough to justify dissolving the constitution and imposing martial law.

Since the May imposition of martial law, severe restrictions have been placed on freedom of speech and assembly, as well as other human rights. Within the first two months of the coup, the military authorities summoned and arbitrarily detained around 700 individuals (former government ministers, journalists, political activists), banned gatherings of more than five people, and announced their intention to pursue aggressively cases of alleged criticism of the monarchy (*lèse majesté*).

The limitations on freedom of speech and the zealous, often retrospective use of *lèse majesté* laws, are of particular concern, resulting in the censoring (and self-censoring) of the media, NGOs, academic institutions, and political opposition. Many from within these groups assert that the situation regarding freedom of expression and assembly is worse than during previous periods of military rule in Thailand. Restrictions on these fundamental human rights compromise the integrity of the national reform process being pursued by coup leader Prime Minister Prayuth's military-dominated government. This government has laid out a roadmap for a return to democracy but, for a democracy to be genuine, it must be inclusive. By placing restrictions on whom can discuss Thailand's political future and limiting the scope of the debate, any

reform of the political system cannot be said to reflect the will of the Thai people as a whole. With a number of constitutional issues still to resolve, many observers are not convinced of Prime Minister Prayuth's commitment to honour the pledge outlined in the government's roadmap to hold elections before the end of 2015.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, the UK and the international community made its disapproval of the military junta's actions clear through bilateral and multilateral statements, publicly setting out our concerns and pressing for a swift return to democratic rule. We continue to raise these concerns bilaterally with the Thai authorities. Along with EU counterparts, we have reconsidered our engagement with Thailand, and adopted a principled but pragmatic approach, which limits bilateral ministerial contact.

The effects of this coup have been significant, and most observers agree that human rights in Thailand have gone backwards as the military has extended its control. Although in absolute terms the human rights situation in neighbouring countries remains of greater concern, it is disappointing to see Thailand's record deteriorate as other countries in the region make progress in a positive direction.

As a strong Asian economy and an influential regional actor, Thailand's democratic health has significance beyond its own borders. For Thailand truly to flourish and become a respected and active player in the global community, it must abide by its international commitments, including on human rights.

the Conflict Pool (which is replaced by the Conflict Security and Stability Fund in 2015).

Another important tool is the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy** (WFD), a non-departmental public body sponsored by the FCO (*please see page 33*). The FCO also works with other groups, including the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to promote inter-parliamentary learning. In addition, we support the work of multilateral organisations such as the UN, EU, Commonwealth and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to strengthen democracy.

The FCO works closely with the Department for International Development (DFID) across this agenda. We also work with DFID on implementing the Millennium Development Goals, and to secure the Prime Minister's priorities on good governance and effective, transparent, and accountable institutions for the post-2015 development framework.

FCO Programme Funding

The FCO HRDP funded projects to support democracy in **Burma, Uzbekistan** and **Venezuela**. These projects ranged from working with parliamentarians from all parties on

legislative reforms in Burma, to improving accountability and transparency of central and local government in Uzbekistan, and promoting competitive elections through transparent and equitable campaigns in Venezuela.

Elections and Election Observation Missions

The FCO, along with DFID, contributes to Election Observation Missions (EOMs) around the world through the provision of funding, UK observers, and other support to organisations in the field, chiefly the EU, OSCE and Commonwealth. We believe that EOMs can play an important part in increasing the legitimacy of elections by building voter confidence, deterring fraud and violence, and enhancing the overall credibility of the electoral process. They may also make recommendations that electoral stakeholders can use to improve future electoral processes, and to embed and strengthen democratic principles and values.

In 2014, the EU observed elections in **Afghanistan, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Kosovo, Maldives, Malawi, Mozambique** and **Tunisia**, and sent three observers as part of the MOG for the elections in **Fiji**. The UK provided a total of 16 observers for EU EOMs.



Bangkok, **Thailand** - 24 May 2014: People who want democracy gathered at Major Cineplex Ratchayothin against the military coup in Bangkok, Thailand.



**WESTMINSTER
FOUNDATION FOR
DEMOCRACY**

The **Westminster Foundation for Democracy** is the UK's leading democracy building foundation.

Central to the Foundation's work is the development of more representative, inclusive and accountable governance systems and strengthening human rights and democracy.

In 2014, WFD supported parliaments and regional programmes in:



Albania	Lebanon
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Macedonia
Burundi	Montenegro
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Morocco
Georgia	Nigeria
Iraq	Pakistan
Jordan	Rwanda
Kenya	Serbia
Kosovo	Tanzania
Kyrgyzstan	Tunisia
	Uganda

Case study

Westminster Foundation's programme *Enhancing women's leadership in the Middle East and North Africa* helped establish a **coalition of Arab MPs** to combat domestic violence in the Middle East and North Africa. The coalition, chaired by **Princess Basma of Jordan**, rapidly gained momentum, **moving from 6 to 10 member countries**. On its first anniversary in Amman on 12 January, the coalition declared the establishment of an **annual day** to highlight the issue of violence against women.

The UK also helped to ensure that elections in **Ukraine** met international standards, providing 100 UK observers to the OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) EOM to the presidential elections on 25 May, and 68 UK observers to the parliamentary elections on 26 October. In addition, we provided UK observers to join OSCE/ODIHR EOMs in **Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova** and **Uzbekistan**.

The Commonwealth sent missions to observe elections in **Maldives, South Africa, Malawi, Antigua and Barbuda, Mozambique, Botswana, Solomon Islands, Namibia** and **Dominica**.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

The FCO is the sponsoring department for the WFD, which works to strengthen parliaments, political party structures and civil society organisations (CSOs). We work closely with DFID on provision of financial and policy support to WFD.

Throughout 2014, the WFD continued its support to institutions of democracy overseas – principally parliaments, political parties and civil society – a role it has played for almost a quarter-century. Through its programmes in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa,

WFD's goal is to strengthen the political institutions, vital to the development of democratic accountability, in emerging democracies and post-conflict countries.

Parliamentary and political party assistance

WFD contributes to the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights around the world by developing the effectiveness of parliamentarians and political parties, as the critical intermediaries between state and citizens. Parliaments perform vital legislative, representative and oversight functions that help ensure citizens' voices are heard and their rights are protected. Political parties can help formulate progressive policies that protect democracy and human rights – including women, children, and minorities – and foster accountability that contributes to effective and inclusive governance. WFD has access to Westminster parliamentary experts, as well as to leading members of all the UK's principal political parties, which work with their overseas counterparts (parliaments and "sister parties" respectively) in order to develop their skills and encourage democratic reform.

Building partnerships – shaping policy

In 2014, WFD supported parliaments in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the **DRC, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tunisia** and **Uganda** – in

UK participation in election observation missions, 2014

The UK provided 224 observers:

16 to the European Union (EU)



220 to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)



Our largest contribution was 168 observers to the OSCE in **Ukraine**:



100

to the presidential election in May



68

to the parliamentary elections in October



Observer deployments range from a **week** to several **months**.



Implementation of observers' recommendations can help to improve future elections.

Countries where UK election observers deployed in 2014:



Afghanistan

UK observers	Deployed by
1	EU



Bosnia & Herzegovina

UK observers	Deployed by
12	OSCE



Egypt

UK observers	Deployed by
4	EU




Kosovo

UK observers	Deployed by
3	EU



Macedonia

UK observers	Deployed by
18	OSCE




Malawi

UK observers	Deployed by
3	EU



Moldova

UK observers	Deployed by
20	OSCE



Mozambique

UK observers	Deployed by
2	EU



Serbia

UK observers	Deployed by
1	OSCE



Tunisia

UK observers	Deployed by
3	EU



Ukraine

UK observers	Deployed by
168	OSCE



Uzbekistan

UK observers	Deployed by
1	OSCE

addition to conducting regional programmes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the Western Balkans, and East Africa.

Aside from programmes with sister parties, the British political parties also work to strengthen and encourage human rights agendas within regional networks of parties, including the Africa Liberal Network (ALN – whose membership rose to more than 40 political parties from across the continent in 2014). With support from the UK Liberal Democrats – the ALN’s biggest partner – 2014 was also notable for the ALN general assembly, which adopted a human rights resolution committing all members to outlaw discriminatory practices based on gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. The ALN will in turn support member parties in influencing and shaping national policy to advance human rights.

Promoting equal rights

WFD continued its support to networks in the **MENA region** that encourage members to work together to promote gender equality. One such network, remarkable for the speed with which it gathered momentum in 2014, is a coalition of MPs founded to combat violence against women – which, by end December, had enlisted a large number of MPs from 10 MENA countries. The formation of the coalition was in part the fruition of WFD’s “Enhancing women’s leadership in MENA” programme – one of many in its portfolio, past and present, that support women’s representation in political parties and parliaments. Common to many of these programmes is the development of skills and networks that can contribute to the formation and implementation of laws, regulations, policies and institutions that protect the rights of women and children. Prevalent among these in 2014 were efforts to tackle gender-based violence.

The promotion of greater inclusivity is reflected in WFD’s work on gender inequality throughout the MENA region, but also in the **DRC, Nigeria and Pakistan**. In addition, it launched a new programme in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** to address the under-representation of women in politics. To this end, WFD is working with leading Bosnian parties to build the capacity and profiles of their women candidates for public office, and helping break down any internal or external barriers to women’s involvement in politics. WFD also launched a new programme designed to protect the rights of women and girls in **Uganda**. The programme aims to strengthen the institutions that can implement national and international laws prohibiting gender-based violence and other discriminatory practices.

Working with civil society to support democracy and human rights

WFD promoted democracy and human rights overseas also by supporting civil society to defend and uphold the rights of citizens. The successful completion of one such programme in **Georgia** resulted in greater opportunities for CSOs to engage with parliamentarians to influence reform processes. This was further consolidated by the inclusion of human rights advocates on the advisory board of the Georgian parliament’s human rights committee. WFD’s civil society programme in Georgia resulted in improved voting facilities for disabled people, greater rights of defence in court trials, more access to

Case Study: Fiji Elections 2014

On 17 September 2014, Fiji went to the polls for the first time since 2006 – an important step in returning the country to democracy after eight years of rule by an unelected military-led government.

In the lead-up to the election, 591,000 people were registered to vote (93% of the eligible population). The Fiji Elections Office ran a nationwide voter education campaign.

Although some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were able to contribute to voter education, most were prevented from playing a meaningful role by a provision in the Electoral Decree that prevented NGOs in receipt of foreign funding from conducting election-related activities. With stiff penalties existing for breaching the decree, including large fines, and a maximum 10-year prison sentence, the decree restricted civil society’s participation in voter education.

Fiji received considerable outside support to run the election, including from Australia, the UK and EU. The UK’s primary human rights objective in 2014 was to provide targeted support to restore democracy. We funded the development of an Information Management System for tabulating the election results, training for police officers on their roles and responsibilities during the election, and a three-day seminar for media professionals on parliamentary reporting, with the UN Development Programme. The Welsh National Assembly and Scottish Parliament also provided advice on infrastructure requirements for the new parliament.

On polling day, a turnout of 84% was recorded. Anyone under 26 was voting for the first time in their life. 248 candidates, representing five political parties and two independents, contested 50 seats in the single constituency election. A Multinational Observer Group (MOG), co-led by Australia, Indonesia and India, observed the election at the invitation of the Fijian government. The MOG comprised 92 observers from 13 countries, including five UK observers, headed by Meg Munn MP. An EU team also participated.

The MOG declared the election had been conducted in “an atmosphere of calm, with an absence of electoral misconduct or evident intimidation, and was broadly representative of the will of the Fijian voters”.

Plans to form a domestic election observer mission were rejected by the Minister for Elections. The negative effect of restrictions placed upon civil society was particularly noted by the MOG.

There was widespread media coverage, with 450 journalists covering the election. However, some local media, whilst reporting the views of all parties, remained biased towards the government. MOG observers noted that, “the regulatory framework for the election limited the media’s ability to rigorously examine the claims of candidate and parties”.

After his Fiji First party won a comfortable majority, Voreqe Bainimarama was sworn in as Prime Minister. Eight women were elected to parliament, with one becoming speaker. Although women only occupy 14% of seats, this is the highest proportion ever. Following the election, the Commonwealth and the Pacific Island Forum both lifted their suspensions on Fiji’s membership.

The UK will focus future efforts in Fiji around strengthening democratic institutions, free speech, civil society, and human rights.

Country Case Study: Burundi – Political Violence

Following the end of the civil war in 2005, Burundi has made limited progress towards a more stable democracy. Despite becoming actively involved in regional peace-building efforts, Burundi remains a fragile post-conflict country, with a government that consistently uses the media and justice system to repress political opposition. Political violence in Burundi has continued to threaten regional stability, and could lead to population displacement into **Rwanda, Tanzania or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**. The UK government was disappointed that the UN Mission in Burundi closed in December 2014. Retaining it until after the 2015 election would have reduced the risk of Burundi deteriorating further.

There have been increasing reports of politically motivated violence, including extrajudicial killings, harassment of the media, and manipulation of the judicial system for political ends. In April, the then FCO Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, met senior members of the government and opposition during a visit to Burundi. Discussions focused on human rights, the importance of justice and reconciliation, and on Burundi continuing to make a positive contribution to regional peace and security. Mr Simmonds also heard first-hand concerns from Burundians about the limitations on political space, and the resultant challenge this could pose for the credibility of presidential elections in 2015.

In May, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, one of Burundi's most active human rights defenders (HRDs), was arrested and detained for over three months. Mr Simmonds raised the UK's concern about the detention. We fear that abuses such as these may increase closer to the elections. The Burundian government has been accused of arming youth militias, with attacks on the homes and staff of opposition members allegedly carried out by pro-ruling party groups. We are concerned by these developments, and will continue to use our influence in the UN and in the EU to keep Burundi on the international community's agenda.

President Nkurunziza has not yet announced whether he will be a candidate in the presidential elections, but standing would be against the spirit of the Arusha Accords. This is being closely monitored by neighbouring countries in similar situations and across Africa, not least because attempts by the President of **Burkina Faso** to extend his term of office resulted in a coup d'état. Peaceful, credible elections that express the genuine will of the Burundian people would be the true mark of a properly functioning democracy. To strengthen democratic accountability and improve the long-term stability of Burundi, the government needs to put an end to the culture of political violence, and abide by the presidential term limits set out in the constitution.

Despite not having a British Embassy in Burundi, regular visits are made by Embassy staff in Kigali. We have two full-time locally engaged staff working at the British Liaison Office in Bujumbura, and staffing levels were recently reinforced for the pre-election period. The UK has also helped to build Burundi's peacekeeping capacity, including providing English language training, and improving the welfare facilities of their military camp.

health services for prisoners, better living conditions for single mothers and their children, the closure of a harmful landfill site, and draft laws on the environment.

Human rights are also at the heart of WFD's democracy strengthening programme in **Kyrgyzstan**, where it has supported the parliamentary human rights committee's inquiries into the rights of migrants and the practice of torture in prisons and detention centres. In 2014, these resulted in policy recommendations and changes in legislation to strengthen links between the Kyrgyz parliament and civil society.

Securing future human rights

Human rights will remain central in WFD's new strategy to be published in early 2015. WFD will continue to focus on parliaments and political parties, but will forge closer alliances with organisations that have complementary skills in strengthening the foundations that underpin democracy: the rule of law, media, civil society, transparency, and accountability. In the year that will also see the emergence of a future set of post-2015 international development goals, WFD will support more evidence-based research into how interventions can most effectively assist the development of legitimate, multi-party, representative democracies – the guarantors of future human rights.

For more information on the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, go to www.wfd.org.

Looking ahead

In 2015, the FCO will continue to support democratic processes and values around the world, working through our network of Embassies and High Commissions, with DFID, and with bilateral and multilateral partners. The 800th anniversary of the sealing of **Magna Carta** offers an opportunity to reflect on and promote core values of democracy, the rule of law and individual rights; the FCO will seek to amplify these messages internationally. We will also work with the WFD to implement the recommendations of the Triennial Review to improve the organisation's effectiveness, and its contribution to FCO objectives.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression, including the ability of the media to operate free from intimidation, are essential elements of any functioning democracy, and provide the basis for an active civil society. In an increasingly digital world, restrictive laws and practices are focusing in particular on the internet and social media. In many countries, governments are using surveillance as a means of political repression, rather than for legitimate purposes such as national security and the detection or prevention of crime.

For these reasons, freedom of expression online and the protection of the existing multi-stakeholder model for a free, open and secure internet remained key priorities for the FCO in 2014. For democratic societies and economies to flourish, it must be possible for people to discuss, debate and challenge ideas. The rapid technological developments of the digital

age have the potential to empower citizens, and “citizen journalists”. But there remains a vital role for the established media, in all its forms, to provide people with reliable and accurate information. The UK remains committed to the principle that the rights which exist offline also apply online.

2014 saw increasing threats to freedom of expression and the media across the world. There was an increase in the number of instances in which social media websites were blocked and online content censored. These actions either directly restricted freedom of expression or created a climate of self-censorship, discouraging others from posting online or engaging with the online community.

Countries have often used security concerns as justification for restrictions on social media and excessive regulation of the media. Whilst governments have a clear responsibility to protect their citizens, in particular from criminal activity and terrorism, this should be done in accordance with clear and transparent rule of law, and in line with obligations under international law. Furthermore, we have seen attempts by governments to restrict the definition of “journalist”, mainly in such a way as to limit the protection afforded to journalists to those directly under state control. In the digital age, the definition of “journalist” has expanded beyond traditional print media to include other media actors, including bloggers. We lobby for references to journalists in international resolutions to include the widest possible definition.

The UK continued to promote freedom of expression online through multilateral institutions, including the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the UN. We actively engaged in discussions on the right to privacy, which have intensified in the light of intelligence revelations. We actively participated in debates on this theme at the UN, which convened a panel discussion and produced a report, and at the Council of Europe. **Brazil** and **Germany** co-sponsored a resolution at the UN General Assembly Third Committee in November on the Right to Privacy in the Digital Age, which was adopted by consensus. The UK welcomes debate about privacy issues, but will continue to argue that this should not be at the expense of adequate international focus on threats to freedom of expression online.

The UK continued to play a leading role in the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC), a group of like-minded countries committed to promoting internet freedom. We engaged with other governments, civil society, industry and international organisations. The FOC’s ministerial conference in 2014 was hosted by **Estonia** and produced a set of recommendations – the Tallinn Agenda – for responsible action in cyber-space. This included commitments by governments to conduct their activities with respect to human rights obligations and to the principles of rule of law, legitimate purpose, non-arbitrariness, effective oversight and transparency, with a call on others to do likewise.

The membership of the FOC grew in 2014, with **Japan** and **Lithuania** joining, bringing to 24 the total number of countries in the coalition. A number of other countries have expressed an interest in joining, or participated at the ministerial conference as observers. Apart from the annual conference, the FOC was active throughout the year in lobbying against restrictive

Case Study: Elections in Tunisia

Tunisia’s popular uprising in 2010 sparked revolutions across the Arab world. In December 2014, it became the first “Arab Spring” country to complete its transition to democracy by holding its first full-term parliamentary election since the revolution, and its first ever democratic presidential election. The manner in which it completed the transition, through inclusive dialogue and consensus, has made it a model for sustainable democracy in the region.

Considerable hurdles were overcome. In 2013, transition teetered on the brink, with polarisation and prolonged political stalemate following two political assassinations and a rise in terrorist attacks. It was saved by a national dialogue led by the “quartet” of key civil society associations (employers, trade unions, lawyers and human rights groups), which engaged political parties across the spectrum, and agreed a “road map”, setting a schedule for future action.

In January 2014, the elected government agreed to resign. It was replaced by a technocratic administration as soon as the new constitution, the most progressive in the region, was approved by resounding majority. In May, a new Electoral Law was adopted, paving the way for parliamentary and presidential elections before the end of 2014, in accordance with the constitution. Parliamentary and two rounds of presidential elections took place between October and December, with turnout exceeding 60% in all three polls.

In response to security threats, the government deployed additional security at polling stations, and the elections passed peacefully. The electoral process was overseen by an independent electoral body, ISIE, which set standards, received complaints, and referred infringements to the courts as it considered necessary. It was praised for its professionalism, independence and impartiality throughout the process by international observers, who also judged the elections to have been free, fair, and transparent.

The former governing party conceded to the winner of the parliamentary elections before the results were formally declared, enabling a peaceful handover of power. Some minor protests followed the declaration of the preliminary result of the presidential election, but subsided when the losing candidate called for calm. Among the challenges for the new administration will be the need to prove that it represents all Tunisians; to entrench hard-won human rights standards while tackling the threat of extremism; and to deliver economic reform to address the economic grievances which, in part, inspired the revolution.

Since 2011, the UK has supported Tunisia’s transition, both bilaterally through the Arab Partnership Programme, and multilaterally through international financial institutions, the EU, and the G8. In 2014, UK-funded projects strengthened the electoral process, supported the monitoring of campaign finance, helped to improve the skills, effectiveness and accountability of members of the Constituent Assembly, and worked with civil society organisations to promote the importance of elections and of political participation.

legislation or actions that limit freedom of expression online. The coalition issued a number of statements throughout 2014, including on the blocking and restrictions of access to social media, and on the use and export of surveillance technology.

As well as working through multilateral institutions, the UK raised its concerns around freedom of expression bilaterally throughout 2014.

In Central Asia, 2014 saw a continuation of the process of using legislation, and criminal prosecutions, to limit freedom of expression, control the media, and create a “chilling effect” on free speech. New laws in **Kazakhstan**, for example, make it a criminal offence to “knowingly disseminate false information” with a penalty of up to ten years’ imprisonment. This is added to several existing laws on defamation in the Criminal Code. In Kazakhstan and **Tajikistan**, as elsewhere in the region, media outlets can be, and sometimes are, shut

down for administrative violations. In Tajikistan one weekly publication, *Khafta*, had its registration revoked for publication of material not in line with the published statutes; it had only published one issue, which contained an interview criticising the authorities. In addition to restrictions on print media, there has also been the periodic and arbitrary blocking of hundreds of websites in Tajikistan, with no transparent or public process detailing the reasons. Targeted sites include those of political opposition groups, human rights organisations, and social media tools.

Freedom of expression continues to be a key priority of the HRDP in 2014. In financial year 2014-15, the FCO funded nine projects around the world, totalling over £500,000. These include projects in: **Azerbaijan**, aimed at increasing the capacity of the legal profession to litigate freedom of expression cases and encourage adherence to domestic and

Country Case Study: Egypt

In 2014, the Egyptian government completed two of the three steps in its road map for political transition. These were a referendum to adopt a new constitution in January, and presidential elections in May. But the human rights situation in Egypt remained poor and deteriorated in some areas, particularly with regards to freedom of expression and association. This had an impact on the political context in which the elections were held. The 2014 constitution enshrines a wide range of human rights, but these protections were not implemented in full. Although the number of deaths of non-violent citizens resulting from security force action reduced in 2014 from the very large numbers in 2013, deaths during the policing of demonstrations and in custody remain a serious concern.

Egypt continued to confront a growing terrorist insurgency. The number of terrorist attacks rose, with members of the security forces the primary target. The Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, and other ministers consistently condemned the terrorist violence in Egypt and the extremism which supported it.

There were increased restrictions on freedom of expression. Reporters without Borders ranked Egypt 159th for press freedoms out of 180 countries. Ministers continued to raise concerns, including the Al Jazeera case. In June, six journalists were sentenced to between seven and ten years’ imprisonment. Two of the three journalists tried in absentia were British. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 12 other journalists were also held in prison on politically motivated charges.

Freedom of assembly remained an area of concern, and the UK government continued to press for a revision of the Protest Law. This law requires police authorisation for demonstrations, and provides for significant prison sentences against opposition activists participating in peaceful protests, including the former leader of the April 6 Movement, Ahmed Maher.

The UK remained concerned at restrictions on freedom of association and at the cumulative pressure against political opposition and dissent. In the run-up to the referendum on the constitution, opposition political activists were arrested while campaigning for a “No” vote. Amnesty International estimated that up to 40,000 people have been arrested since July 2013, in the context of demonstrations or opposition political activities. In September 2014, Prime Minister David Cameron raised with

President Al-Sisi concerns about the number of people in pre-trial detention.

Civil society groups complained of harassment and intimidation from state authorities. They were concerned at the implications of a deadline for all NGOs to register with the Ministry of Social Solidarity in November. After consultation with civil society, the government decided to postpone introducing a new NGO law until the new parliament was formed. We called on the Egyptian government to ensure the law reflects the constitution’s guarantee of civil society freedom. FCO ministers discussed the situation for civil society with the Egyptian Minister for Social Solidarity during her visit to London in November.

Since the election of President Al-Sisi, there has been new government impetus, promoted by the President himself, to tackle the endemic problem of sexual violence in Egypt. Several convictions followed the new sexual harassment law, passed by Interim President, Adly Mansur. In spite of this, the protection of women’s rights in Egypt continues to be a concern.

The new Egyptian government has been clear about its intent to protect religious freedoms. The Coptic Christian community has reported improvements in the protection of religious minorities.

The National Council for Human Rights reported that violence and torture was used in detention. An Egyptian rights group, Wikithawra, estimated that approximately 80 people had died in detention between late 2013 and early 2014. After a de facto moratorium since 2010, 11 prisoners were executed in Egypt in June 2014. Over 1,200 people were sentenced to death in 2014, many in absentia, but most of these sentences were later commuted to life sentences.

On 5 November, Egypt underwent its second review under the UN Human Rights Council’s (HRC) Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UK recommended full implementation of the Egyptian government’s provisions for the free operation of civil society and completion of the National Strategy on Violence Against Women. We also used the UPR to invite the Egyptian government to address human trafficking, the opening of an OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) regional office in Cairo, and reports of mistreatment in detention.

Country Case Study: Bangladesh – Political Violence

The build up to the 10th parliamentary elections in Bangladesh on 5 January was tarnished by serious levels of violence, intimidation, enforced general strikes, and transport blockades. The 18-Party Alliance, including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), objected to the constitutionally valid electoral arrangements, and did not contest the election due to their concerns that the election would not be free and fair. Half of parliamentary seats were uncontested, and the Awami League won a second successive term. Election day was marked by violence: 21 deaths were reported, and over 100 school-based polling centres burnt down.

We repeatedly condemned all forms of violence and encouraged political parties to work together. On 6 January, the then FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Warsi, deplored acts of intimidation and unlawful violence from all parties, and urged all of Bangladesh's political parties to work together to address political accountability. We also raised our concerns with both the government and opposition parties privately. Baroness Warsi raised concerns with visiting Bangladeshi ministers, as did former Minister of State for International Development, Alan Duncan, and former Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State for International Development, Lynne Featherstone, during visits to Bangladesh. All three ministers urged Bangladesh's political parties to work together to strengthen democratic accountability, and to build wider confidence in future elections.

After the elections, the BNP committed to peaceful protest, although political tension at the end of the year led to the re-emergence of widespread political violence. There were significantly fewer enforced general strikes and transport blockades in 2014 and, overall, the country experienced a period of relative

calm. However, there has been no political dialogue between the country's two largest parties: the BNP and Awami League.

NGOs report that impunity of all Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies continues to be a serious problem. NGOs condemned a post-election spike in numbers of reported extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances allegedly carried out by law enforcers. Allegations of involvement by the Rapid Action Battalion in the death of seven men in Narayanganj drew domestic and international criticism. Baroness Warsi called for prompt, transparent and impartial investigations when she met the Bangladeshi High Commissioner in May. As yet, none of the three investigations established to find those guilty have delivered findings, and no charges have been brought.

The government has proposed revisions to the Foreign Donations Act (pending parliamentary approval) and a new Broadcast Policy, while some using digital media to criticise the government have been detained under the Information Communications Technology Act. This has generated concerns about civil society space, media freedoms, and government power to suppress criticism or dissent. The government has also restored parliament's authority to impeach judges, which, depending on how it is implemented, could compromise the independence of the judiciary.

Prime Minister David Cameron met Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 22 July. He noted our disappointment over the conduct of the election. Both agreed on the importance of an open society and political systems in which democratic political participation and media freedoms are respected.

international obligations; **Bangladesh**, aimed at increasing understanding and commitment of key governmental actors and law-makers to an initial legal reform process, and informing bloggers and online activists about their rights; and **Russia**, aimed at improving the digital, physical, legal safety and protection of Russian journalists and bloggers.

The Foreign Secretary's Advisory Group on Human Rights has a Sub-Group on Freedom of Expression on the Internet. The group brings together representatives from academia, civil society and industry. The group met in July with a particular focus on the UK's proposals around data retention law, and the various reviews which are taking place into the UK's authorisation and oversight procedures.

Case Study: Political Participation in Swaziland

According to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, political participation in Swaziland is amongst the worst in Africa. Swaziland ranks 50 out of 52 countries on this indicator for 2014.

This year saw a number of worrying developments that further constrained the ability of people to engage in politics, in particular to exercise their rights of freedom of expression and assembly. Swaziland dropped to 156 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index. High-profile examples included the sentencing of journalist Bheki Makhubu and lawyer Thulani Maseko to two years in prison after writing an article criticising Swaziland's judiciary. Mario Masuku, President of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), and Maxwell Dlamini, from the Swaziland Youth Congress, were also arrested in May for allegedly seditious comments contravening controversial terrorism legislation. The UK raised concerns about these cases, and the broader human rights environment, with the Swazi authorities throughout 2014, including alongside other EU member states at the EU-Swaziland "Political Dialogue" on 3 October. We remain concerned that there has been no progress on these cases.

At the end of 2014, the US withdrew preferential access to the US market for Swazi exports, having placed five conditions, relating to freedom of expression and assembly. An amendment to the Industrial Relations Act in November had addressed two of these conditions, permitting the registration of federations such as the Trade Union Federation, but did not address other areas. Failure to take the necessary steps threatens an estimated 13,000 jobs in Swaziland's textile industry, damaging an already vulnerable economy.

More broadly, there are long-running, institutionalised constraints on political participation. We continue to be concerned that the

Tinkhundlha electoral system was used in the 2013 elections. It allows only individuals (not political parties) to participate, and is widely seen as failing to meet international standards.

The concentration of power around the monarchy also limits political participation. The King has a direct say in the composition of the judiciary, parliament and government, as well as the succession of traditional chiefs who wield considerable power at a local level. Parallel customary and judicial court structures cloud accountability and access to justice. Political space for civil society is restricted, and its capacity to hold the government to account is limited.

Gender inequalities also act as barriers to entry for women in the political sphere. Women face unequal social, economic, legal, political and cultural treatment. Some laws still treat women as minors and second-class citizens, despite the 2005 Constitution's Bill of Rights declaring that women should be free from any form of discrimination or abuse. Legislation to help make this a reality continues to be delayed.

Alongside the resident EU and US missions to Swaziland and other international partners, the UK has consistently urged the Swazi government to implement democratic reform and to open up political space. The UK contributes to EU programmes to raise the capacity of civil society and promote advocacy at a grassroots level to encourage greater political engagement. The UK will continue to pursue this agenda in 2015, including working with the Southern African Development Community and the Commonwealth through its Special Envoy to Swaziland, former **Malawian** President Bakili Muluzi.



Kiev, **Ukraine** – February 17, 2014: Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) – Journalists take pictures of activists on barricades.

Case Study: Freedom of Expression in China

The climate for freedom of expression in China continued to be difficult in 2014. There were tightened controls over the activities of many HRDs attempting to express their opinion peacefully in accordance with the Chinese Constitution. This despite an ostensible focus on promoting the rule of law and protecting human rights by 2020, as announced by President Xi at the Fourth Plenum of the Communist Party of China Congress in October. The detention of several prominent dissidents and lawyers has coincided with a nationwide anti-corruption campaign, which began in 2013. As well as the prominent work of HRDs and rights lawyers, there continue to be thousands of local, largely unreported public protests and demonstrations throughout China every year, mainly focused on socio-economic grievances and the impact of pollution.

Episodes of cyclical tightening of the space for freedom of expression and HRDs were evident throughout the year, encompassing large-scale detentions on the mainland. These often coincided with sensitive days and events, such as the 25th anniversary of the violent suppression of popular protests, and democracy protests in **Hong Kong**. An increasing number of those detained have been charged with the ambiguous crimes of “picking quarrels and causing trouble” and “involvement in illegal business activities”. Legal protections guaranteed under the revised Criminal Procedure Law, which entered into force in 2013, are not being applied universally, including reports of detainees being denied access to lawyers.

Restrictions on freedom of expression were also apparent in the media sphere. New legislation from 2013 has been used to prosecute bloggers for spreading “gossip”. The BBC and many other foreign websites have been blocked, especially during sensitive periods such as the **Hong Kong** protests. In December, Google joined the list of international social networking and file-sharing services blocked in China, alongside Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The Chinese government’s focus on the rule of law is encouraging. The task ahead is ensuring that this principle is universally applied in accordance with international norms, including respect for human rights. The UK continues to work in partnership with China on a variety of projects in this field, and uses the annual UK-China Human Rights Dialogue, bilateral representations, and international fora to discuss freedom of expression.

Country Case Study: Ethiopia – Media Freedoms

We were concerned about continuing restrictions on press freedoms and freedom of expression in Ethiopia in 2014, including through use of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (ATP). Those detained under the ATP include members of opposition groups, journalists, peaceful protesters, and others seeking to exercise freedom of assembly or expression.

In July, seven bloggers from the “Zone 9” group and three journalists were charged under the ATP. The case is ongoing. In October, the prominent journalist and editor, Temesgen Dessalegn, was sentenced to three years in prison. He is appealing his conviction whilst in detention. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 17 journalists were held in detention in 2014 – up from seven in 2013, and the fourth highest number in the world. CPJ also believes that more than 30 journalists fled Ethiopia in 2014. The Ethiopian government stated that the journalists may return, and that it has no intention of charging them.

In June, up to twenty journalists from the Oromia Radio and Television Organisation were dismissed, allegedly in relation to their critical views on student protests in the region. In August, five magazines and one newspaper ceased publication following the government’s decision to charge them under the Criminal Code in August. Studies by the Open Net Initiative and Freedom House have shown that access to electronic media is restricted. Dozens of websites, including international news sites, which feature critical content or cover sensitive political issues, have been either intermittently or permanently blocked. Other factors that work against a free media environment include challenges for private sector publishers to access affordable and reliable printing presses, and a lack of professional training for journalists.

We have raised concerns about restrictions on media freedoms at the highest levels of the Ethiopian government. In September, at the UN HRC’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) we recommended that Ethiopia take concrete steps to ensure that the 2015 elections are more representative and participative than those in 2010, including by encouraging open debate among political parties. Ethiopia accepted this recommendation and we are waiting to see what action they will take.

The UK also raised these issues regularly at the most senior levels of the Ethiopian government. We continue to attend trials which have implications for press freedom, in order to assess whether they meet international fair trial standards. In May and July, the EU issued joint statements reiterating the importance of political space and freedom of expression. The EU called for due process and respect for human rights regarding the detention of the “Zone 9” bloggers, journalists, and opposition figures.

Freedom of expression is a core characteristic of any democracy. The UK believes that a more open environment, in which press freedoms are protected, will strengthen democratic accountability and contribute to Ethiopia’s long-term stability.

Country Case Study: Honduras – Journalists under Threat

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, for several years Honduras has been classified as one of the most violent countries in the world not in a state of war, with a rate of 90.4 murders per 100,000 people. Levels of impunity remain high, with perpetrators of violent crimes rarely brought to justice. These figures impact significantly on the ability of all Hondurans to exercise their basic human rights, and have led to Honduras being included for the past five years as a country of concern in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) Annual Report.

One of the most serious concerns is around restrictions on freedom of expression. During 2014, both Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House categorised Honduras as “not free”. Both organisations said that journalists are subjected to direct and public threats of death and torture, criminalisation, bans on practising their profession, and indirect censorship through restrictions on access to media. Statistics show that, since 2009, more than 40 journalists have been killed.

The British Embassy in **Guatemala City**, which is also responsible for developing and maintaining relations between the UK and Honduras, maintains regular contact with freedom of expression organisations, journalists, and public officials in Honduras. We have also encouraged local authorities to continue investigating attacks on journalists. In October, a PEN Centre opened in Honduras to provide help for those journalists and media communicators who have been victims of violence. The British Embassy provided funding to PEN (a worldwide association of writers) in support of this initiative. The director of the centre, Dina Meza, has been subject to threats since 2006 and, despite obtaining special protection measures from the IACHR in 2013, these threats persisted in 2014. We have also closely followed the case of Julio Ernesto Alvarado who was banned from working as a journalist following his report into a corruption case. Such cases have led journalists to seek a change in the law to protect their rights to freedom of expression.

The prevalence of violence and threats and the high levels of impunity have often led journalists to practise a form of self-censorship. They work in an environment of fear, which makes it extremely difficult to conduct proper investigative reporting.

January 2014 saw the start of a new government under President Juan Orlando Hernández. The new government has shown an interest in addressing human rights issues and tackling violence, and there has been a recent reduction in the murder rate to 66 deaths per 100,000 people, according to official figures. The government has also sought to maintain a close relationship with the international community as a way to help tackle some of these issues. One example of this was the first ever visit by a group of British parliamentarians in November under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The visit allowed an exchange of views on a wide range of human rights issues with government officials, NGOs and journalists themselves. In December, the Honduran government also welcomed and cooperated fully with a visit from the IACHR.

Country Case Study: Rwanda – Freedom of Association and Expression

2014 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, a tragedy during which approximately a million people lost their lives. On 7 April, the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, attended commemorations in Kigali in order to pay tribute to the victims of the genocide, and to demonstrate the UK’s commitment to Rwanda and the Great Lakes region.

Rwanda’s progress on economic and social development remains impressive. However, the UK continues to have concerns about civil and political rights. We continue to urge the Rwandan government to address human rights concerns around freedom of expression and political space.

In January, former Head of Rwandan Intelligence, Patrick Karegeya, was found murdered in a hotel room in Johannesburg, **South Africa**. In August, a South African court found four men guilty of the attempted assassination of former Rwandan Army Chief of Staff, Kayumba Nyamwasa. The judge concluded that the crime had been “politically motivated” and had “emanated from a certain group of people from Rwanda”. The UK is deeply concerned by what appears to be a succession of acts of violence against Rwandan opposition figures.

During April and May, dozens of local people in north-west Rwanda were arrested and held incommunicado for up to two months. Some were later charged with various offences against state security, including collaborating with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an armed group in eastern **DRC** with origins in the Rwandan genocide. The UK recognises that Rwanda has the right to prosecute those who seek to use violence against the state. In this case, however, the UK regrets that due legal process was not followed.

In October, former presidential bodyguard, Joel Mutabazi, was found guilty of treason and terrorism and sentenced to life in prison. He has appealed and continues to argue that his forcible return from **Uganda** did not respect due process. We call on the Rwandan authorities to ensure that due process is followed.

Bernard Ntaganda, leader of opposition party PS-Imberakuri, was released from prison in June after four years’ incarceration. We continue to monitor the situation of other imprisoned political leaders and activists, including Victoire Ingabire and Sylvain Sibomana, both of the FDU Inkingi opposition party.

The UK believes that a free and vibrant media has an important role to play in any democracy. Following the broadcast in October of a BBC documentary about the Rwandan genocide, the Rwandan authorities suspended the BBC’s Kinyarwanda service and launched an inquiry. The UK recognises the hurt caused in Rwanda by some parts of the documentary, but is concerned by this decision, and urges the Rwanda government to allow the BBC to resume its broadcasts as soon as possible.

The UK welcomed the freedom with which the East African newspaper was able to operate. We noted with concern the forced cancellation of talk shows on Isango Star and Contact FM, and the arrest of two journalists from Salus Radio in 2014.

The UK welcomed, as an important step forward in tackling impunity, the arrest and trial of two police officers in connection with the July 2013 murder of Gustave Makonene, a Transparency International employee.

CHAPTER V: Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law

In order to protect their societies from crime, states sometimes need to use force, and to remove the liberty of convicted criminals. How states impose such sanctions is a core component of human rights – recognised in the UK as long ago as Magna Carta, which stated (in 1215) that:

“No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land.

To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay, right or justice”.

These principles remain part of British law to this day.

States which do not respect the rights of their citizens to just process are often the most dangerous and lawless places to live. Conversely, countries with the highest respect for human rights tend to be safer, less criminal, and more orderly. In other words, governmental respect for human rights and public respect for the law can, and should, go hand-in-hand.

But the UK recognises that this balance is hard to achieve, and that many of our international partners are seeking to do so in difficult circumstances. Our approach is always to provide practical assistance where we can. Rule of law and access to justice programmes by the Department for International Development have enabled 85 million people in the poorest countries to hold their authorities to account, and millions of women to access security and justice. For other situations, where progress requires us to work closely with local authorities, including in countries of human rights concern, we have developed the Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) framework. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) issued revised guidance on the human rights aspects of OSJA in February 2014. The guidance ensures that officials do their utmost to identify risks of UK actions causing unintended human rights consequences. Where such risks are apparent, officials must do their best to mitigate them and ensure that ministers are appropriately consulted. As the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, told Parliament in March:

“Our expertise is highly valued across the world and improves the standards and capabilities of law enforcement and security agencies operating in the most challenging environments. Through this work, we aim to improve security and increase respect for the rule of law. However, it is important that we ensure that the skills and expertise we impart are not used to cause harm. The OSJA guidance is the government’s tool for assessing the human rights risks of our overseas security and

justice assistance work and identifying measures to mitigate such risks”.

The Death Penalty

Global abolition of the death penalty remains a priority for the UK government 50 years after the last execution took place in the UK. We oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. We contend that its use undermines human dignity, that it has no value as a deterrent, and that any miscarriage of justice in capital cases is irreversible and irreparable. To states which retain and implement the death penalty, we offer practical and more effective alternatives.

The international trend towards abolition of the death penalty received strong support in December 2014 by means of the largest-ever UN General Assembly (UNGA) vote in favour of establishing a worldwide moratorium. 117 out of 193 UN member states voted in favour of the resolution, an increase of six votes since the last UNGA vote on this issue in 2012.

Equatorial Guinea, Suriname, Niger, Fiji, Eritrea, Kiribati and **Sao Tome and Principe** were the new states voting in favour. While not binding, the growing support for this resolution shows that world opinion is hardening against the use of the death penalty.

There were some reversals in 2014: **Jordan** resumed executions after an eight-year period during which none had been carried out; and **Pakistan** carried out executions, having observed a de facto moratorium since 2008. Jordan cited public concerns over crime, while Pakistan was influenced by an appalling terrorist attack on a school in which 132 children died. To both governments we expressed understanding of their responsibility to protect the public from crime and terrorism, but argued that the death penalty is not an effective way to do so.

The government’s strategy for the abolition of the death penalty, which was updated in October 2011, defines three goals to support our overarching objective of global abolition. First, we aim to increase the number of abolitionist countries, or countries with a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. Secondly, in countries that still apply the death penalty, we want to secure further restrictions on its use and reductions in the numbers of executions. And, thirdly, when the death penalty is applied, we aim to ensure that universal minimum standards on its use are met. These include fair trial rights and the non-execution of juveniles.

In 2014 we continued to place a particular focus on two geographic regions: **Asia** and the **Commonwealth Caribbean**.

The picture in **Asia** has been mixed. In a number of states and territories in the region, steps are being considered to reduce the number of offences for which the death penalty may be applied – often a significant step on the path to abolition. Our Posts are actively following these developments and offering expert UK assistance where possible. However, executions did take place – two in **Singapore** (the first since 2008), and five in **Taiwan**, as well as unconfirmed reports of executions in **Malaysia**. It is believed that **China** continues to implement the highest number of executions in the world. While official figures are a state secret, estimates are in the [low] thousands.

Project work funded by the FCO, together with other governments, will help to clarify the question of public opinion on the death penalty in **Japan**, which executed three prisoners in 2014. The Japanese government has traditionally maintained that over 80% of the public supports capital punishment. However, research we have funded in other countries suggests that this figure tends to drop once the public is better informed about the circumstances leading to capital convictions, and the possibility of errors in justice systems. International experts, including the UN Human Rights Committee, have expressed concerns over the trial system in Japan; in May the Japanese authorities ordered a retrial and the release of Iwao Hakamada – after 45 years in solitary confinement, he was the world's longest-serving death row prisoner.

In the **Commonwealth Caribbean**, FCO-funded project work in recent years has helped to establish legal safeguards, which have effectively restricted the use of the death penalty (see Chapter III for further details).

The FCO supports the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, which is chaired by Baroness Stern, and which works energetically with parliamentarians worldwide to bring about abolition. In 2014 the FCO funded lobbying visits by its members to the **United States, Vietnam** and **Suriname**. The group has also held consultations with the **Taiwan** Representative Office following previous visits by APPG members.

One outcome of this work has been readiness by **Suriname** to take formal steps towards abolishing the death penalty. Following the APPG visit, our Embassy has been involved in setting up expert-level consultations, which will hopefully lead to legislation being tabled during 2015. Suriname has not carried out any executions for many years. Each country which formally abolishes the death penalty strengthens the abolitionist trend in world opinion.

World Death Penalty Day on 10 October provides an important annual focus for worldwide efforts to promote abolition. To mark the occasion, we held a joint event with the APPG in London, attended by representatives of around 70 diplomatic missions. Baroness Stern, Chair of the APPG, and FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, delivered keynote addresses, supported by the Ambassadors of **Mexico** and **El Salvador**. We were able to discuss views with a number of

representatives of retentionist countries on retiring the death penalty, and we look forward to continuing this exchange.

Our keynote speakers noted that it was 50 years since the last execution took place in the UK, and reaffirmed their belief that the death penalty has no place in the 21st century. They also welcomed the fact that more than 150 members of the UN had already renounced capital punishment, in law or practice, and hoped that all other states would soon follow.

Throughout 2014, we raised the death penalty regularly with individual states in the United States, including specific cases, both bilaterally and with EU partners. The use of the death penalty in the United States is declining. In 2014 there were 35 executions in just six states – only the third time in 20 years there have been fewer than 40 executions. In April, during an execution in Oklahoma, poor administration of lethal drugs led to the condemned man suffering for 43 minutes before death. This spurred President Obama to announce a federal review of the problems surrounding the application of the death penalty. So far, 18 out of 50 American states have abolished the death penalty completely.

In 2015, we will continue to implement our strategy. We will fund further project work in a number of countries. We will also seek to consolidate the gains made at the UNGA vote on a worldwide moratorium.

Torture Prevention

"Torture is always wrong."

–Prime Minister David Cameron, 9 December 2014

Global torture prevention remains a priority for the UK government. Torture or other ill treatment is abhorrent and prohibited under international law. The impact on victims, their families and their communities is devastating. It can never be justified in any circumstance. The UK is clear that it does not participate in, solicit, encourage, or condone the use of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment for any purpose.

On 10 December, the international community celebrated the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

To date, 156 countries are States Parties to the convention. Despite these commitments, torture is still widely practised. All too often the perpetrators go unpunished and steps are not taken to prevent the crime being repeated.

In 2014, we continued to pursue the three goals of the FCO Strategy for the Prevention of Torture 2011-15: to ensure that legal frameworks are in place and enforced; to develop political will and capacity to prevent and prohibit torture; and to fund projects to ensure organisations on the ground have the necessary expertise and training to prevent torture.

Preventing torture and tackling impunity for those who commit torture are not only the right things to do, but are integral to fair legal systems and the rule of law. All this work should be mutually reinforcing, and we have made clear our determination to address allegations of UK complicity in any wrong when it is alleged that mistakes have been made.

Case Study: Mexico and Impunity

During 2014, 14,413 people were reported killed, 1,332 kidnapped, and a further 5,098 disappeared in Mexico, according to information from the Executive Secretariat of the Mexican National Public Security System. The Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography estimates that in 2013 impunity reached its highest recorded rate yet – with 93.8% of crimes either not reported to the authorities or not investigated, mostly due to fear of extortion, the long and difficult processes required, or lack of trust in the authorities.

Two high-profile cases gained significant international coverage. In Tlatlaya, State of Mexico, a confrontation between soldiers and suspected criminals on 30 June led to the death of 22 people. It later emerged that some of the individuals appeared to have been executed by military forces after being apprehended. Eight soldiers have since been arrested and seven have been charged. In Iguala, Guerrero State, on 26 September, six people were killed, and a further 43 students from the Ayotzinapa teacher college “disappeared”, after they were seen being taken away by police. The Mayor of Iguala, his wife, and over 60 others have since been arrested, and the deaths of the 43 students have been confirmed. The case has generated widespread and sustained protests across the country.

The UK was party to the statement issued by EU member states in Mexico City, which expressed serious concern about these cases, and welcomed the statements made by Mexican federal authorities, promising that those responsible would be held to account. The UK government regularly discusses human rights

matters with the Mexican government as part of our bilateral dialogue.

The Mexican government has announced a series of measures to strengthen the rule of law and address impunity, including the creation of a specific law on torture and enforced disappearances, strengthening procedures and protocols for investigations such cases, and the implementation of criminal justice reform.

Mexican civil society is undertaking important work to help tackle human rights abuses and impunity, and the British Embassy in Mexico is supporting these efforts. In 2013-14, the Embassy provided funding for Ciudadanos en Apoyo a los Derechos Humanos (Citizens in Support of Human Rights) in its efforts to strengthen criminal prosecution and judicial processes in the state of Nuevo León, resulting in a strengthened legal framework for addressing enforced disappearances, and improved access to justice.

In 2015, the British Embassy will support the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Asistencia Legal por los Derechos Humanos (ASILEGAL) in its efforts to strengthen the capacity of judges, magistrates, public prosecutors, police and public defenders in Chiapas. This project will help ensure implementation of Mexico’s wider Criminal Justice Reform Programme via capacity-building training.

Our efforts are intended to contribute to human rights improvements and help strengthen the justice system, as well as support civil society in Mexico.

The Detainee Inquiry is an example of this determination; see Chapter VII for more details. Torture prevention work also supports consular work by helping to reduce the risk of mistreatment of British nationals imprisoned abroad.

Throughout the year, we used our influence and diplomatic network to raise individual cases and concerns, both publicly and in private. To mark International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on 26 June, the then FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Warsi, made a statement reiterating the government’s commitment to combating torture, and encouraging states that had not yet done so to ratify the CAT and its optional protocol (OPCAT). We harnessed social media to raise awareness of the global problem of torture. Working closely with the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) and the co-founder of Survivors Speak Out (a network of torture survivors), we used the day to ensure that our policy is not only informed by the experience of the survivors of torture, but that we also give them a voice.

We have continued to pursue the prevention of torture through multilateral organisations. In the UN, we pledged support for the secretariat to the Sub-Committee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and contributed to the Special Fund for the OPCAT. The UK strongly supported the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which was once again adopted by consensus, and the renewal of the Special

Rapporteur’s mandate. In September, FCO Minister for Defence and International Security, Tobias Ellwood, made a statement at the UNGA during an event held by the Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI). The CTI has set itself the goal of universal ratification of the CAT by 2024, and a reduction in the risk of torture through sharing good practice and technical assistance. In his statement, Mr Ellwood gave the UK’s full support for this important initiative, and confirmed that the UK was joining the Group of Friends of the initiative.

At the UNGA Third Committee, we spoke during a session with the Chair of the Committee against Torture, the Chair of the Sub-Committee on Prevention of Torture, and the Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In the EU, we played a role in the “Task Force” on torture, and participated in discussions to mark the 30th anniversary of the CAT, and the global eradication of torture. In the Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe, we contributed to discussions on a Ministerial Council decision on torture prevention. In the Council of Europe (CoE), we supported the work of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture. The committee is comprised of an independent expert from each of the member states, including the UK, and makes cyclical visits to monitor places of detention. Its work is closely considered by the CoE Committee of Ministers when monitoring situations of concern in countries, most recently in **Ukraine** and **Russia**. In November, the committee paid its first visit to Gibraltar to assess the conditions of detention, and the safeguards in place

Country Case Study: Bahrain – Reform Implementation

Throughout 2014, the government of Bahrain continued to take incremental steps to implement its human rights and political reform agenda, though there continued to be serious concerns related to political and civil rights. The UK continued to provide a package of technical assistance focused on strengthening human rights and the rule of law, in line with the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) and the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

In November, Bahrain held its fourth parliamentary and municipal elections, the first full elections since the unrest in early 2011. Turnout for the first round on 22 November was 52.5%, although no figures were publicly released for the second round on 29 November. The UK, along with other members of the international community, was disappointed by the decision of the main opposition societies to boycott the elections and to call for their supporters not to vote. This followed the breakdown of the political dialogue with the government of Bahrain. The election period saw acts of intimidation against candidates and voters and a spike in violence. However, overall, we judge the process to have been transparent.

The government of Bahrain continued its efforts to strengthen police accountability and build oversight mechanisms across the criminal justice system. The Ministry of Interior's Ombudsman's Office, the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission, and the National Institute of Human Rights (NIHR) released their inaugural reports this year. Some progress has been made in implementing their recommendations, and we encourage the government of Bahrain to move resolutely to address the remaining recommendations in all three reports.

In December, the Ministry of Interior's Ombudsman and the NIHR received the EU Chaillot award for the Gulf region in recognition of progress made on promoting human rights.

We continue to raise our concerns over allegations of mistreatment and torture, and urge the government of Bahrain to ensure that all allegations are fully, independently and transparently investigated. In November, we registered concern at the death of an inmate at Bahrain's Reformation and Rehabilitation Centre. An investigation by the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) led to six members of staff, including three high-ranking officers, appearing before the High Criminal Court on 25 November. All six defendants pleaded not guilty, and the case was adjourned until a later date. In November, the SIU investigated video footage showing a person being assaulted in a police car, and charged the police officer in question. The SIU also probed nine cases of alleged torture and

four cases of alleged mistreatment in December, which remain under investigation. It is crucial that police officers are held fully accountable for their actions and are sentenced accordingly. Ombudsman's Office figures in July 2014 showed that 14 officers had been charged with human rights violations. Of those, 12 are facing trial, one received a six-month sentence, and another faced disciplinary action. During his visit to Manama in December, the Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, raised UK concerns about human rights issues with the King and Crown Prince of Bahrain.

The NIHR report, published in September, made recommendations on Bahrain's judicial system. Some progress is being made. In November a Bahraini delegation carried out a study visit to Northern Ireland to learn about the juvenile justice system. SIU staff members also attended training sessions in the UK on forensic evidence, interviewing skills, and the rights of suspected persons. However, concerns remain about apparent inconsistencies in sentencing.

Freedom of speech and expression continued to be inhibited. In July 2014, the 2013 decree requiring the registration of contacts between political societies and foreign parties was enforced for the first time. Over the course of 2014, a number of individuals were convicted for inciting illicit activity, insulting ministers and/or ministries, and spreading false information. In December, Sheikh Ali Salman, the Secretary-General of the main opposition society Al-Wefaq, was charged under anti-terrorism and anti-coup laws. We encourage the government to ensure that due legal process is followed in all cases, and that sentencing is proportionate. In addition, Nabeel Rajab, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was arrested on charges of insulting the Ministry of Interior and the Bahrain Defence Force.

Although there is a de facto moratorium on carrying out the death penalty, three people received death sentences in 2014. All three still have the right to appeal, and we will continue to monitor any developments closely.

FCO Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood, hosted the fourth UK-Bahrain Joint Working Group on 4 December, which focused on reform and the UK's technical assistance.

In 2015, the UK will continue to support the government of Bahrain in implementing its human rights and political reform programme through the provision of technical assistance, training, and best practice sharing. This will include support on reforms of the youth justice system, and court administration and further capacity building for key institutions such as the Ombudsman's office.

for persons deprived of their liberty. The committee also visited the UK to examine the treatment and conditions of detention of one person convicted by the Special Court for **Sierra Leone**.

"The UK launched its Strategy for the Prevention of Torture in 2011. This global strategy may be the first of its kind. As the strategy makes plain, torture prevention is a human rights priority for the UK and an issue which we care deeply about."

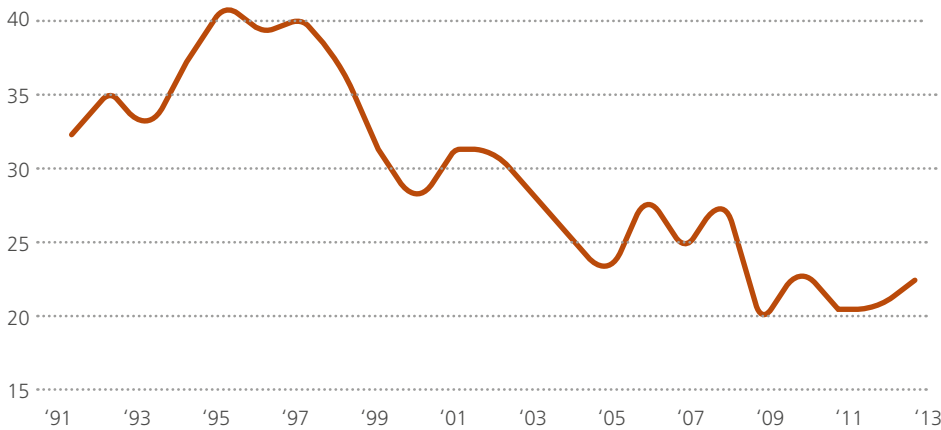
—Mr Ellwood, speaking at the UN in New York, September 2014

Throughout 2014, we continued to work with local and international NGOs, prosecutors, prison services and other partners. Activities included:

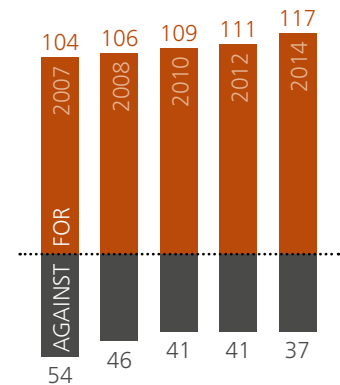
- > encouraging governments to sign and ratify the CAT and OPCAT. We welcomed the accession to the CAT by **Eritrea**; the ratification of the OPCAT by **Finland** and **Greece**, and the accession to the OPCAT by **Lithuania, Morocco** and **Mozambique**;
- > dedicating Human Rights and Democracy Programme funds to eight torture prevention projects during the financial year 2014-15. These include a second year of a multi-country project carried out by the APT, which

Progress on abolishing the death penalty

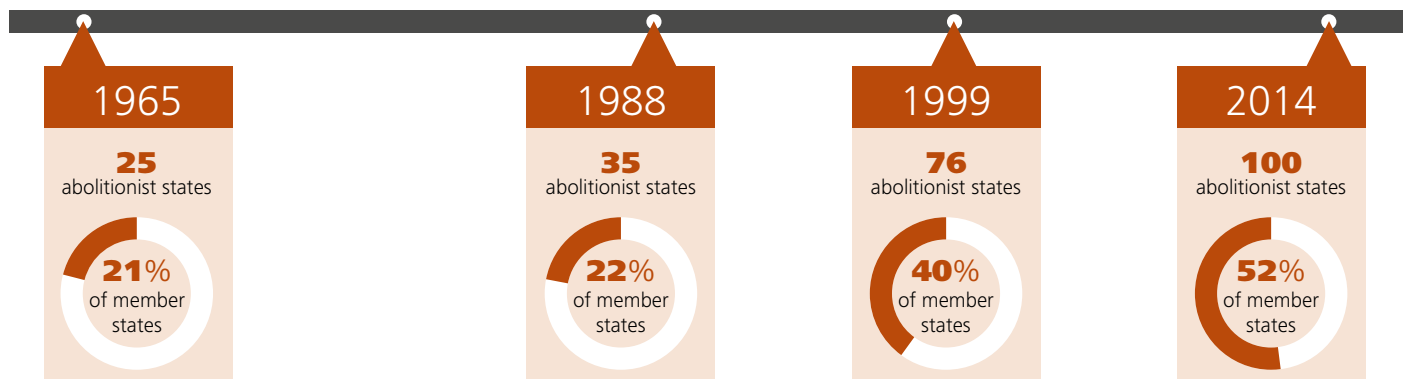
Number of countries carrying out executions, 1991–2013



UN member states voting for a moratorium on the death penalty



Abolitionist UN member states, 1965–2014



aims to promote an open and informed process of ratification and implementation, ensuring effective National Preventative Mechanisms (NPMs) mandated by the OPCAT are put in place. This has involved torture prevention work in **Bahrain, Brazil, Fiji, Indonesia, Morocco, Burma, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey** and **Uganda**. We have also funded an update of the Torture Reporting Handbook by the University of Essex; and

- > British Embassies and High Commissions marked International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. For example, the British Chargé d'Affaires to **Kazakhstan** made a statement emphasising UK support in the establishment and implementation of the NPM against Torture.

The FCO's Advisory Sub-Group on Torture Prevention, including experts from academia, the legal profession, NGOs, former police officers and prison governors, continued to advise on implementation of the FCO Strategy for the Prevention of Torture, identifying lessons learnt so far, and providing advice on the focus of future work.

International Justice System

The UK's support for international criminal justice is based on the principle that there must be no impunity for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

International justice can make a contribution to the promotion of long-term security by addressing the underlying causes of conflict, helping victims of atrocities and their communities obtain justice and come to terms with the past, and deterring those who might otherwise commit such violations in the future.

The UK has continued to provide political support and practical assistance and cooperation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and **Rwanda** (currently transitioning to a new mechanism for international criminal tribunals), and the voluntarily-funded tribunals for **Sierra Leone, Cambodia** and **Lebanon**. The UK provided financial contributions of over £16 million in 2014.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC is the world's first permanent independent international criminal court with jurisdiction over the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole.

UK support to the ICC is underpinned by the UK ICC Strategy, launched in 2013, which seeks to ensure that the ICC retains its independence, delivers justice, increases its membership, builds more support for its decisions from states and from the UN Security Council, gains wider regional support, and completes its work more efficiently.

There are currently nine ongoing situations before the ICC: **Uganda**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, Darfur (**Sudan**), **Kenya**, **Cote d'Ivoire**, **Libya**, **Mali**, and two investigations concerning the **Central African Republic (CAR)**. In addition, there are now eight ongoing preliminary examinations, in **Afghanistan**, **Honduras**, **Colombia**, **Nigeria**, **Georgia**, **Guinea**, **Iraq** and **Ukraine**.

In May, the ICC Prosecutor announced the reopening of a preliminary examination into allegations of abuses by UK forces in **Iraq**. The UK government rejects the allegation that there was systematic abuse carried out by British forces in Iraq, but we also recognise that the Prosecutor must follow the proper procedures when serious complaints are made. We will continue to cooperate with her office.

The annual ICC Assembly of States Parties took place from 8-17 December in New York. With the UK delegation headed by Baroness Anelay, implementation of the International Protocol on Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence was a priority for UK participation. The UK also worked with other States Parties to agree a budget for 2015 and elect six new judges to take up post in 2015.

The Trust Fund for Victims was established by the Rome Statute with a dual mandate of implementing court-ordered reparations and providing physical, psychological and material support to victims and their families. In 2014, the UK contributed £1 million to projects for survivors of sexual violence in conflict through the Trust Fund for Victims. We will continue to support the ICC in its efforts to place victims at the centre of the response to international crimes.

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

In 2014, the UK continued to support the ICTY and the tribunal's work to deliver justice to the victims of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

The timely completion of ICTY trial activity is a priority for the UK. In January, the ICTY Appeals Chamber upheld convictions in cases of Šainović, Pavković, Lukić, and Lazarević, four former high-ranking Yugoslav and Serbian officials convicted in 2009 for crimes committed against Kosovo Albanians in 1999. The trials of Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić, and Goran Hadži also all reached important milestones. In Karadžić's trial, the defence case closed on 1 May, and closing arguments were held between 29 September and 7 October. In Mladić's trial, the prosecution rested its case on 26 February (although it was subsequently re-opened following the discovery of new

evidence) and the defence case opened on 19 May. Finally, in Hadžić's trial, the prosecution rested on 9 April, and the defence case commenced on 3 July. However, progress on Vojislav Šešelj's case has been delayed, and on 6 November he was provisionally released on humanitarian grounds and transferred to Serbia. His trial is expected to resume in 2015.

The UK continued to play a leading role in supporting the ICTY's work by providing consistent political and practical support; such as granting access to UK records, UK-based witnesses, and other ad hoc requests for assistance.

In 2015, the ICTY will continue to hand over activities to the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT). The UK fully supports this transition, and will continue to support activity that safeguards the ICTY's legacy.

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

2014 marked the 20th anniversary of the **Rwandan** genocide and establishment of the ICTR. The genocide in Rwanda was a global tragedy, which has had a profound influence on the international community's approach to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and international justice. The ICTR's work over the last 20 years has been instrumental in developing international law and ensuring that those most responsible for the genocide are held accountable.

The ICTR held a number of events to mark both of these important anniversaries, and continued its transition to the MICT. The UK believes that efforts must continue to apprehend the remaining ICTR fugitives.

The ICTR's work is expected to conclude and its transition to the MICT to be completed in 2015. The UK will continue to support the ICTR's work to tackle impunity, deliver justice to the victims of the **Rwandan** genocide, and secure the ICTR's legacy.

Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)

The most senior surviving members of the Khmer Rouge regime, Kheiu Samphan and Nuon Chea, were sentenced to life imprisonment in the first phase of Case 002 in August. This phase focused on alleged crimes committed during the forced movement of people from cities in 1975-76. The ECCC is now hearing the appeal while continuing with the trial in the second phase of Case 002, which deals with such crimes as the genocide of the **Cambodian** Muslim population, forced marriage, and rape. Throughout the year, the court's outreach program continued to help educate and inform Cambodians across the country about its work.

The FCO Minister for Asia, Hugo Swire, emphasised the importance of the court's work, both privately and publicly, on his visit to **Cambodia** in January 2014. The UK also contributed £500,000 to the court in 2014, and helped the fundraising effort by lobbying new and existing donors to provide contributions. In addition, the UK also joined the UN and other members of the Principal Donors Group to secure UN authority to commit US\$15.5 million to supplement voluntary donations. This provided the court with the financial stability and certainty it urgently needed. We will continue efforts to place the court on a secure financial footing in 2015.

The Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone (RSCSL)

The RSCSL opened on 1 January to carry out ongoing and ad hoc functions that remain in order to secure the legacy of the Special Court for **Sierra Leone** (SCSL). It is responsible for supervising sentences, witness protection, and managing the SCSL archives. It is the first residual court mechanism of its kind formally to take over from its predecessor and, as such, is important for the long-term sustainability of international justice.

Charles Taylor, the first former head of state since the Nuremberg trials to be convicted for war crimes, is currently in a UK prison serving the remainder of his 50-year sentence for aiding and abetting war crimes during the **Sierra Leone** civil war.

The UK contributed £100,000 to the court in 2014. The UK will maintain its support for the RSCSL in 2015, including on the RSCSL oversight committee.

Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL)

On 16 January, the trials of four of the five individuals suspected of killing former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri began at the STL. The trial was adjourned in February to allow defence counsel for the fifth defendant to prepare, and resumed in June. All five individuals remain at large, but the STL continues to operate under the Lebanese criminal code, and is the first tribunal of its kind to allow trials in absentia.

The UK has contributed £5.5 million to the STL since 2009, and continues to support the STL's work fully. As an independent tribunal, the STL has an important role to play in promoting stability and respect for the rule of law in **Lebanon**.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

IHL is a distinct body of law from international human rights law. IHL, as codified in particular in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, and as established in customary international law, regulates the conduct of armed conflicts.

2014 was the 150th anniversary of the first Geneva Convention. To mark this important occasion, the FCO and the British Red Cross held an event entitled "150 years of International Humanitarian Law: the UK Experience" attended by ministers, MPs, government officials, foreign diplomats, NGOs, academics and members of the media. We also published a paper, "The UK and International Humanitarian Law", which can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-humanitarian-law-and-the-uk>

The UK has worked closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on their initiative to strengthen mechanisms of compliance with IHL. 2015 will see the 32nd quadrennial International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent take place in Geneva, at which the ICRC will provide an update on this initiative. The conference will also be an opportunity to further UK IHL and humanitarian policy objectives, and we will make a number of pledges on actions that we intend to take in coming years.



Chai, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo - 29 March 2014: FDLR soldier walking with Rwandan refugees.



*Picture: Department for International Development
International actress and Plan International Girls' Rights Ambassador,
Freida Pinto, dances with activists from Integrate Bristol at DFID's
#YouthForChange event.*

CHAPTER VI: Equality and Non-discrimination

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Freedom of religion or belief, based on the full definition set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, has continued to be a human rights priority for the UK government throughout the course of 2014. It is one of the most difficult areas in which to make visible progress, but it is a fundamental human right, and one that impacts on many other rights. A particular focus of government activity has been combating extremism, and preventing it from taking root. Our policies and initiatives in this area have focused on a wide range of countries where we judge that the UK is best placed to make an impact and have been aimed at promoting societies where everyone may freely practise his or her religion, change religion, or exclude religion from their own world view; and where everyone is encouraged to accept that others are entitled to live out their own belief, without persecution.

2014 presented a challenging global environment for the exercise of freedom of religion or belief. Particularly devastating has been the march across **Iraq** and **Syria** of ISIL, with its war cry of “convert, or die!” and its murderous rejection of all who do not subscribe to its perverted version of Islam. Muslims, Christians, Yezidis and others have all been affected. In Iraq, as in other parts of the Middle East and North Africa, the space for Christians has continued to close, with the Christian population in Iraq reportedly shrinking from 1.2 million before 2003 to just 350,000 today. In Syria, the continued brutality of the Syrian regime has radicalised many and stoked sectarian tensions, while extremist groups such as ISIL have obstructed the exercise of religious freedom, dramatically increased attacks on religious communities and buildings, and continued to target civilians on the basis of religion or belief. And across the Middle East and many parts of Africa, the extremist religious ideology espoused by groups such as the Taliban, Boko Haram and El Shabaab has spawned widespread human rights abuses directed at all whose beliefs are different from their own.

As in previous years, there have been many heart-rending individual cases, in many different countries, where individuals have been persecuted, imprisoned and discriminated against because of their faith or belief. Most of these cases do not attract wide public attention. However, during 2014, one story in particular prompted campaigning around the world – the case of Meriam Ibrahim, charged with apostasy and adultery and imprisoned in **Sudan** with her young son while heavily pregnant. Meriam, who was tried for choosing to follow and marry into the Christian faith while her father

was a Muslim, was obliged to give birth to her daughter in chains. Prime Minister David Cameron, Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, and the then Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, all publicly condemned the treatment of Ms Ibrahim, and called on the government of Sudan to respect her human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. Following wide media coverage and concerted pressure from the international community, plus support from her legal team (one of whom was trained in the UK) who worked tirelessly on the case, Meriam was eventually released. However, she was forced to flee the country and is now in the United States.

This was not an isolated case. Ms Ibrahim’s situation caught the world’s imagination; however, others, facing similar charges and pressures, but without publicity, are forced to renounce their faith and their families. We continue to press the government of **Sudan** to undertake a comprehensive review of the relevant legal issues to ensure its laws reflect both its own constitution and international human rights standards. On her departure to the **United States**, Mr Simmonds issued a statement that called on the government of Sudan to “reflect on the lessons of Meriam’s case and ensure that [freedom of religion or belief] is upheld for all.”

In **Pakistan**, the arbitrary application and misuse of blasphemy laws, and the lack of accountability for those who discriminate against or attack those from religious minorities, has led to many abuses of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Mr Cameron raised our concerns about the blasphemy laws with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in both April and December. The Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, also raised these concerns with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on 13 November and FCO Minister for Pakistan, Tobias Ellwood, discussed the misuse of these laws with Pakistan’s High Commissioner in October. We will continue to raise these issues at the highest level in Pakistan; and to urge the government to guarantee human rights as laid down in Pakistan’s Constitution, and in accordance with international standards. We are concerned that Asia Bibi’s latest appeal against her sentence for blasphemy was rejected, and have expressed our hope that the verdict will be overturned on appeal. We were also shocked by the violent murder of a couple accused of blasphemy in November. FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, issued a statement in response, urging the authorities to investigate and to bring to justice those responsible.

In addition, during the year there were increasing concerns about the high level of discrimination against the Ahmadiyya in **Pakistan**. In July, the then FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Warsi, expressed her concern about the killing of an Ahmadiyya woman and two children in Gujranwala when a mob set fire to houses, following accusations of Ahmadiyyas posting blasphemous content on social media sites.

There has been no real improvement in the treatment of minority religious groups in **Iran** in 2014. The Baha'i community continue to be systematically persecuted. 2014 saw the desecration of a prominent Baha'i cemetery in Shiraz, which was halted following international outcry, but resumed a few months later. The Baha'i community continue to face restrictions on access to education and employment, and the seven leaders of the Baha'i faith remain in prison. Christians, and especially Christian converts, continued to face widespread persecution in 2014. Many Christians were arrested in the course of the year, the majority for their involvement in the house church movement. Sunni Muslims and Dervishes also suffered discrimination and human rights abuses. We continue to raise these issues at the UN and other international fora.

In **Burma**, 2014 saw continuing prejudice and discrimination against the country's religious minorities. In addition to the ongoing desperate situation of the Rohingya Muslim community in Rakhine State, violence against Muslim minority communities flared up in locations across the country. This has corresponded with an alarming increase in hate speech and the rise of vocal minority Buddhist nationalist movements within

Burma. Deeply troubling new laws have also been proposed on interfaith marriage and religious conversion. There have been reports of harassment, intimidation and threats against civil society activists who have voiced criticism of these laws. We have expressed strong concerns over religious intolerance and the proposed faith-based legislation to the Burmese government and parliamentarians. We are also pressing the Burmese authorities to take steps toward a long-term solution in Rakhine that brings peace and reconciliation, and protects the human rights of all communities. FCO Minister for Asia, Hugo Swire, spoke out publicly to this end on his visit to Burma in January 2014, and met representatives of the Rohingya community to hear their concerns first-hand.

Worldwide, we have continued to promote the right to freedom of religion or belief in four ways. We have: acted through multilateral organisations and with a wide range of international partners; raised issues bilaterally; funded targeted project work; and continued to improve the religious literacy of our own staff, to equip them better to engage with faith groups and to appreciate the many ways in which the right to freedom of religion or belief may be violated.

In the multilateral system we have worked to ensure that the two resolutions on this subject – the EU-sponsored text on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the parallel text led by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on combating religious intolerance – were again adopted by consensus at the March session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and then at the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

Case Study: Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East

In 2014, conflict and instability in the Middle East and North Africa threatened human rights in the region, including the freedom of individuals to practise their religion or belief. In addition, violence committed in the name of religion increased, and the plight of religious minorities remained deeply worrying.

Some communities which had existed peacefully for centuries fled for safety. In particular, Christians were obliged to desert parts of the region, and Yazidis were forced to leave places where they had lived for years. But not only Christians and Yazidis suffered. People of many beliefs – Sunni, Shia, Druze, Alawite, Jewish, Baha'i and other groups – were all affected.

The UK government attaches great importance to ensuring that people of all faiths or none can participate fully in society and live without fear of abuse or discrimination. We regularly press governments in the Middle East and North Africa to ensure the protection of all, regardless of their religion or belief, and encourage them to develop inclusive political systems which represent all of their citizens.

As part of this, in July, FCO Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Tobias Ellwood, met Archbishop Athanasius Dawod, Head of the **Syria** Orthodox Church in the UK, to demonstrate our support for the church and to discuss the difficulties faced by religious groups in **Iraq** and the region. Mr Ellwood heard first-hand about atrocities committed by ISIL, and their intimidation of all who do not subscribe to their violent ideology. During his visit in August, Mr Ellwood pressed the government of Iraq to ensure the

protection of all minorities, promote human rights, and reassert the rule of law. In October, our Ambassador to Iraq discussed the need to include and protect all communities with newly-appointed Prime Minister al-Abadi. We acted in other countries too – for instance, in July, our Ambassador to **Lebanon** met the Lebanese Foreign Minister with senior Christian leaders to discuss the situation in Lebanon and show support for the Christian leaders.

At a global level, the government worked through multilateral bodies, including the UN, to strengthen international acceptance of the importance of freedom of religion or belief. And we backed our words with actions. In **Iraq** and **Syria**, a number of UK-funded projects brought together religious leaders (from a variety of religions) to foster greater understanding between faiths and to support reconciliation. We helped the Iraqi government with their humanitarian situation and with internally displaced persons – pledging £39.5 million and urging them to do more in terms of humanitarian support, regardless of people's religious or ethnic affiliation. And in **Tunisia**, as part of a project run by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Democracy, we funded an event on the protection of religious minorities under the new Tunisian constitution. In December, Baroness Anelay, accompanied by Baroness Elizabeth Berridge, Chair of the All Party Group on International Freedom or Belief, met senior officials at the **Holy See** to explore how the UK and Holy See could work together to help ensure the survival of religious pluralism and support religious diversity across the Middle East.

We recognise that individual countries' actions to promote and protect the right to freedom of religion or belief and combat religious intolerance are more important than action in the UN. However, we continue to believe that preserving the UN consensus gives us a valuable point of departure for discussions on this issue with countries whose perspective differs radically from our own. Experience shows that language that gains currency in UN resolutions does slowly trickle down into domestic legislation. Again this year, we were able to strengthen the EU resolution on freedom of religion or belief slightly, including with a reference to the protection of religious minorities. We continued to support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, and were pleased to be able to host a discussion of his report, "Tackling Religious Intolerance and Discrimination at the Workplace", in the margins of the UNGA in New York. We also worked to ensure that country-specific resolutions, such as that adopted by the **Iraq** Special Session of the HRC in September, contained language on the right of people from all religions or beliefs to contribute equally to society.

Over the course of the year, every FCO minister has raised individual cases and discriminatory legislation and practices in the countries for which they are responsible. In addition to the **Pakistan** and **Sudan** examples cited above, Mr Ellwood spoke out in July to condemn attacks by ISIL on Christians and other religious minorities. He called on the international community to support the government of **Iraq** in its fight against ISIL. Baroness Warsi visited **Oman** and **Saudi Arabia** in February to discuss freedom of religion or belief. She gave a speech at

the Grand Mosque in Muscat which commended Oman for pursuing mutual respect and understanding between religious groups. She raised the importance of this in Saudi Arabia with the Governor and Mayor of Makkah, the Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques, and the head of the OIC. In April she visited **Malaysia**, to deliver a speech on freedom of religion or belief to an audience convened by the Global Movement of Moderates; and she attended a Christian church on Easter Day in Brunei.

Within the EU, we continued to work with partners and the European External Action Service to ensure that the EU's Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief were implemented at country level and incorporated into national action plans and strategies. We also worked closely with EU partners on joint statements and démarches in individual countries, for example in **Sudan** and **Pakistan**.

Beyond the EU, we welcomed the creation, by the office of **Canada's** Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, of an international contact group on freedom of religion or belief. We were also encouraged by the efforts of parliamentarians from across the globe to work more closely to raise the profile of freedom of religion or belief through the creation of an international parliamentary network.

Despite the intrinsic difficulty of designing effective projects on this topic, we increased the number of good quality bids to our Human Rights and Democracy Programme Fund. Amongst other projects, we funded a series of workshops to promote

Case Study: Freedom of Religion or Belief in South East Asia

Whilst South East Asia remains a highly diverse and mostly tolerant region, there were some worrying signs of increased discrimination against religious minorities in 2014.

Malaysia also saw growing concerns over religious freedom in 2014, including moves to stop non-Muslims from using the word "Allah", the seizure of bibles and other religious texts, and proposals to introduce Hudud, the Islamic penal code. Government policies promote Sunni Islam, whilst other teachings and forms of Islam remain illegal, and there have been some arrests of individuals who are considered deviant. The politicisation of Islam by the ruling UMNO party is also a concern, and could further reduce tolerance towards non-Muslim Malaysians, negatively impacting on their right to freedom of religion or belief.

In the main, most people in **Vietnam** are able to practise the religion of their choice. However, there are reports of religious persecution of some ethnic minorities. Religious leaders and groups are also subject to the same restrictions on freedom of expression that affect the rest of the population. There was disruption to elements of a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in July 2014. His visit was subject to official surveillance, and the activists he was due to meet were intimidated, meaning he was unable to investigate certain issues of concern.

Indonesia's peaceful democratic transition over the last 15 years has been remarkable, and it has strong pluralist and inclusive traditions. Whilst the country's constitution enshrines plurality of religious belief, hostility towards, and occasional attacks on,

the Ahmaddiya, Christian and Shi'a communities has intensified in recent years, without a clear government response. The major outbursts of inter-religious violence seen in the early 2000s have not been repeated, but risks remain. In a positive development, ministers in the new government, elected in 2014, have undertaken to draft legislation that will strengthen protection for Indonesians to choose and practise their own religion or belief, whatever that may be. We continue to support small-scale civil society projects in Indonesia to strengthen respect for freedom of religion or belief.

In Brunei, the government introduced the first phase of a sharia penal code in May 2014. Further phases (which include punishments such as stoning and amputation) have not yet come into force. We have urged the authorities in **Brunei** to consider the impact of the new code very carefully. We have also encouraged a delay to the introduction of the further phases until the authorities have fully considered compliance with Brunei's international human rights commitments, and the right to freedom of religion or belief.

There are different factors contributing to restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in South East Asia. However, we would like to see consistent messages from individual governments and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to send a strong signal that religious discrimination and violence will not be tolerated. The region's traditions of tolerance and diversity have underpinned stability and supported rapid economic growth, which we hope to see continued. We also had concerns about anti-Muslim discrimination in **Burma**. This is covered above, in the section on anti-Muslim hatred below, and in the Burma report.

responsible media reporting on sensitive issues around religion and conflict in **Burma**, and worked to enhance the role of the judiciary through policy reform and training in **Indonesia**. We also pledged a contribution to and joined the Executive Board of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). This is a new global fund, drawing on resources from both public and private sectors, dedicated to building resilience against violent extremist agendas through local community-based projects.

We continued to run our programme of religious literacy training for our staff, holding our one-day training course three times in the year and continuing our regular series of lunchtime seminars. Topics covered this year have included the role of religion in **Israel/Palestine**, media reporting from religious hotspots, understanding Hinduism, militant Buddhism, and World Christianity and its influence on international affairs. A prominent speaker in this series was former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Rowan Williams. We have continued to welcome colleagues from different UK government agencies to take part in our courses.

A new development has been the setting up of an advisory group on freedom of religion or belief, as a sub-group to the Foreign Secretary's Advisory Group on Human Rights. Its members are acknowledged experts in the field, drawn from a wide range of different backgrounds and perspectives. Like the other advisory groups, it met twice during the year, and we have consulted its members on an ad hoc basis between meetings. Their expert advice and challenge has strengthened policy formation in this area.

Looking ahead to 2015, we will aim, in particular, to encourage closer cooperation between EU member states on this issue, including through the convening of an international workshop in February, and to play an active part in the new Canadian contact group. We will continue to consult the advisory group and will design a religious literacy element of the foundation level curriculum for the FCO's new Diplomatic Academy. We will be vigilant in ensuring that individual cases of persecution are raised promptly and at the highest level. We will do all that we can to stem the tide of persecution of individuals on the basis of their religion or belief.

Antisemitism

Throughout 2014, the government continued to develop and implement strategies to address rising antisemitism both in the UK and internationally. We engage closely with civil society groups and law enforcement agencies to build greater victim confidence in coming forward to report incidents, as well as tackling hate crime itself. We encourage our Embassies and High Commissions across the world to remain vigilant to resurgent antisemitism and report to London on developing issues of concern. We work actively through multilateral organisations and bilaterally to tackle antisemitism wherever it is found. The UK is highly regarded within the international community for its efforts in this field, and is often invited to share best practice in international fora.

The FCO plays an active part in the Cross-Government Working Group on Antisemitism. Over the course of 2014, the group

has continued to provide an invaluable opportunity to review long-term efforts between government and the Jewish community to discuss and tackle antisemitism. The group is coordinated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and consists of civil servants from across Whitehall, representatives of the Community Security Trust, Jewish Leadership Council, Board of Deputies of British Jews, and the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism. In this way, the government is kept fully informed of trends in antisemitism and threats to the Jewish community. The group also provides a forum for Jewish community leaders to hear directly from the government about steps being taken to address antisemitism.

During 2014, the group was addressed by Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and Communities Minister Stephen Williams. It also met the Cross Government Working Group on Anti-Muslim Hatred in order to share best practice. The government is fully committed to ensuring that the group continues in its current form. This has been welcomed by the Jewish community, which has expressed public and private support for its continuation.

In 2014, the group stepped up its efforts to tackle internet hate crime, engaging with major international social media sites to ensure perpetrators of such crimes cannot remain anonymous. Its government members collaborated to produce a report, published in December, "Government Action Against Antisemitism", which constituted the government's final response to the Enquiry of the All-Party Group on Antisemitism (2006).

In November, the Swiss Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) organised a "High Level Commemorative Event" in Berlin to mark the 10th anniversary of the Berlin Conference on Antisemitism. The event took reviewed commitments made in 2004 in light of new challenges relating to the rise of antisemitism in continental Europe, including after last year's Gaza conflict. The UK sent a strong delegation, led by DCLG Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Penny Mordaunt. UK engagement was multidisciplinary, including the Ministry of Justice policy lead on hate crime, the Head of the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Department, and civil society in the form of the Community Security Trust. The Chair of the UK's All Party Parliamentary Group on Antisemitism, John Mann, spoke at the event.

OSCE participating states followed up the Berlin meeting by agreeing a "Declaration on Enhancing Efforts to Combat Antisemitism" at the annual OSCE Ministerial Conference in Basel in December. The declaration expressed concern at the number of antisemitic incidents taking place in the OSCE area, condemned manifestations of antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination against Jews, and called on political leaders and public figures to speak out against antisemitic incidents whenever they occur. We attach importance to the work of the ODIHR in supporting the efforts of OSCE participating states to counter antisemitism, including through the facilitation

Case Study: ISIL

This section covers human rights concerns relating to ISIL only. For broader human rights concerns relating to **Iraq** and **Syria** please see their country of concern sections.

2014 saw ISIL make substantial territorial gains in Iraq and **Syria**. The UK government has been horrified by the brutality and inhumanity of ISIL, and the worsening humanitarian situation in Iraq and Syria.

ISIL fighters routinely use beatings or lashings, stoning, amputations and crucifixions as punishments. There are numerous reports of murder, unlawful detention, sexual violence enforced disappearances, and torture, inhuman and degrading treatment of civilians, including children.

ISIL uses extreme brutality to repress populations. There have been widespread reports of massacres against civilians, including of Yezidis and Christians in Mosul and Sunni tribesmen in western Anbar Province, both in **Iraq**, and mass executions in Ar-Raqqah and Homs in **Syria**. Mass graves have been discovered in Deir ez Zour in Eastern Syria.

ISIL routinely conduct executions, including of children. Residents are encouraged to attend and bodies are often displayed for days. The UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on **Syria** has said that there are “reasonable grounds to believe that [ISIL] has committed the war crime of execution without due process”. Numbers are difficult to obtain or verify but the [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#) has documented 1,175 executions of civilians by ISIL in Syria.

ISIL have kidnapped and murdered hundreds of innocent people, including international journalists and humanitarian workers.

Freedom of expression is severely restricted in ISIL-controlled areas. The COI [found](#) that ISIL “systematically targeted sources of dissent”. ISIL has attacked or imprisoned those who speak out, or do not adhere to the group’s ideology. Journalists have been abducted and killed and [Reporters Without Borders](#) say ISIL-controlled areas are now media “black-holes”.

ISIL routinely persecute human rights activists, including Sameera Salih Ali al-Nuaimy, an **Iraqi** human rights lawyer, who was abducted, tortured, and publicly executed in Mosul.

ISIL has imposed a twisted interpretation of Sharia law, enforced by its Al-Hisbah morality police. The COI found that harsh penalties are summarily meted out on the principle of “guilty until proven innocent” and detainees “have no access to lawyers and are afforded none of the due process rights inherent in a fair trial”. Punishments, including lashings, execution and crucifixion, are often carried out publicly as a deterrent.

ISIL’s attacks on civilians are not just confined to **Iraq** and **Syria**. In addition to attacks in the region, attacks have also taken place in Europe, **Australia** and **Canada**, including the first attack in Europe which took place in Brussels in May, killing four people. While the extent of ISIL’s involvement is yet to be determined, it is clear that these attacks were ISIL-inspired, and that at least one was carried out by an ISIL returnee from Syria.

Minorities in **Iraq** and **Syria** – including Christians, Turkmen Shi’a, Yezidis and Kurds – have been systematically targeted by ISIL, placing the long-term survival of some communities at risk. Amnesty International [reported](#) that ISIL has carried out ethnic cleansing “on a historic scale” in Iraq. The COI noted ISIL’s targeting

of minorities has forced communities to assimilate or flee. ISIL enforce their ideology strictly and brutally. There have been widespread reports of minorities being pressured to convert to Islam or risk execution. ISIL fighters have also destroyed sites holy to non-Sunni Muslims in both Iraq and Syria.

Women and girls have seen their freedom appallingly restricted by ISIL. Women have been banned from public life and those who do not adhere to ISIL’s strict rules risk brutal punishment, including lashings and stoning. There have been widespread reports of women and girls, including several thousand Yezidis in northern **Iraq**, being abducted by ISIL fighters, subjected to forced marriage, rape and other sexual violence, and sold into slavery. Displaced women and girls are also vulnerable in and outside internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. They are exposed to increased levels of domestic violence as well as sexual harassment, organised prostitution, and sex trafficking.

Children have been indoctrinated by ISIL in school and trained as child soldiers. There are reports of children being used as executioners, checkpoint guards and suicide bombers.

UK action

The UK condemns the brutal human rights abuses perpetrated by ISIL fighters, and is committed to defeating ISIL through a comprehensive and sustained international strategy, as part of the efforts of the global anti-ISIL coalition. In **Iraq**, the UK is working closely with regional, US, European and other partners to defeat ISIL in Iraq and **Syria**, and to help prevent and manage the impact of ISIL on the region, particularly in **Lebanon** and **Jordan**. And, at home, we are taking action to prevent attacks and identify those who are planning them.

Cutting off ISIL’s access to funding and foreign fighters is key to defeating ISIL. We have led efforts to reinforce sanctions against those who try to recruit fighters, and strongly supported multilateral initiatives including UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 2170 and 2178. UNSCR 2170, a UK initiative, was adopted unanimously in August 2014, condemning ISIL, the Al-Nusra Front (ANF) and other terrorist groups listed under Al Qaeda sanctions. In **Iraq**, UK airstrikes, surveillance and support to the Iraqi Security Forces and the Peshmerga forces have contributed to halting the advance of ISIL and its brutal practices. The UK co-sponsored the resolution passed by the UN Human Rights Council on 1 September, which highlighted ISIL’s abhorrent actions, and committed to a fact-finding mission to Iraq to investigate these atrocities. The mission’s findings will be discussed in March 2015. We have called for the situation in **Syria** to be referred to the International Criminal Court and supported a UNSC resolution to that effect in May, which was vetoed by **Russia** and **China**.

We have pledged £700 million in aid to **Syria** and the region. The Department for International Development is supporting partners to protect and support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. We are also working with the Canadian government to build the capacity of **Iraqi** organisations to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

In both **Iraq** and **Syria**, we will continue to look at every available option to ensure accountability, and to work with our international partners on what can be done both to assist the victims and to bring those responsible to justice. We will work closely with coalition partners to continue the international fight against ISIL.

of cooperation on issues such as hate crime and Holocaust remembrance.

IHRA (see below) continued to play an active role in monitoring and challenging antisemitism through its Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. The committee considered reports on a number of countries during its meetings in London and Manchester as part of the UK Chairmanship programme, and made recommendations to the Plenary on how to fight antisemitism in all its forms.

Post-Holocaust Issues

The UK plays a leading role in international collaboration to ensure that the lessons from the Holocaust remain forever seared in our collective memory, focusing particularly on future generations. Our international efforts are spearheaded by Sir Andrew Burns, the UK Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues, who aims to draw together the excellent work being done by UK non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Holocaust education, remembrance and research, and to facilitate the international sharing of best practice.

2014 saw the UK taking on the chairmanship of the foremost international body in this area, the **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance** (IHRA). We hold the chairmanship until March 2015. As part of our chairmanship, we organised two Plenary meetings in the UK, in London in May and in Manchester in December, each attracting around 250 of the world's leading Holocaust experts from IHRA's 31 member states, eight observer countries and seven international partners. The May meeting was preceded by an academic conference on the Roma Genocide, organised by IHRA's Committee on the Genocide of the Roma, in partnership with the Holocaust Education Centre of the Institute of Education, University of London. The December meeting was preceded by a conference, organised by Staffordshire University, entitled "What Britain knew: The Holocaust and Nazi Crimes".

We used our chairmanship to facilitate discussions in the Plenary meetings on issues of real substance, continuing the shift away from a focus on procedural issues. Expert working groups analysed the impact of Holocaust education and sharing best practice. They conducted research into the killing sites, where enormous numbers of Holocaust victims met their death in quarries, woods and ditches at the edge of towns and villages across Eastern Europe. They also identified the scope and need for further liberalisation of access to Holocaust archives. In addition, they helped with the development of Holocaust remembrance in countries coming relatively new to the subject. The May meeting approved a new grant strategy and the December session adopted new guidelines on the use of social media in Holocaust education.

As IHRA Chair, Sir Andrew Burns visited many IHRA member countries, and countries considering IHRA membership, or partnering with IHRA in some other way. His visits included the Vatican City, **Hungary, Turkey, Macedonia, Albania, Romania, Moldova** and **Greece**. As a result of British efforts, and those of previous IHRA Chairs, Albania, Moldova and **El Salvador** joined as new observer countries at the December Plenary. Sir Andrew also contributed to ensuring that IHRA

plays a more active role in discussions about how lessons learned from the Holocaust can help in future genocide prevention. The UK will be succeeded as chair by Hungary and then Romania. We have had extensive discussions with both about IHRA's future leadership needs.

Sir Andrew represents the UK on the International Commission of the International Tracing Service (ITS), which oversees the management of archives from the concentration, slave labour and displaced persons camps. Under the professional supervision of its Director, Dr Rebecca Boehling, the ITS continues its transition towards a modern, outward-facing research resource. While continuing to prioritise research assistance for victims of the Holocaust and their families, the ITS is opening up its archives to public access. Good use continues to be made of the UK digital copy of the ITS archive, which is available for consultation at the Wiener Library in London. There were 241 requests for access in 2014, up slightly on the 2013 figure. There has been a steady increase in academic/thematic research. The remainder of the requests were from Holocaust survivors and their families. There was excellent cooperation throughout the year between the Wiener Library and other institutions holding copies of the ITS archive, with the aim of ensuring that the results of research are made available to all institutions, and that expertise in navigating this difficult resource is pooled.

Sir Andrew continued to try to make progress on the tricky area of restitution of property seized by the Nazis and their allies during and in the run-up to the Second World War. In 2014, he raised specific cases with the governments of **Germany** and **Poland** and joined with other member states of the European Shoah Legacy Institute in Prague in developing common strategies towards restitution of fixed property, restitution of cultural property, and improved social welfare for Holocaust survivors in countries where they lack adequate care.

The Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission continued its work during 2014 to consider how best the UK might ensure that it has a permanent memorial to the Holocaust and educational resources for future generations. In the margins of the IHRA Plenary meeting in May, we facilitated meetings between members of the commission and international Holocaust experts. The commission also visited **Israel** and the US as part of its evidence-gathering process.

Another aspect of post-Holocaust work is looking after the welfare of Holocaust survivors. A large number of these have chosen to make their home in **Israel**. Our Ambassador in Israel has continued to expand a network of social clubs for Holocaust survivors, known as Café Britain. There are now 21 clubs across Israel, attended each week by over 1,600 survivors. These clubs continue to provide an emotional lifeline, enabling the survivors to deal with the trauma of their wartime experiences in a warm and caring environment. The clubs continue to offer activities such as art, storytelling workshops and memoir writing, as well as educational trips throughout the country, exercise, dance, and yoga, and therapy for people with autism, dementia, or developmental disabilities. The British Embassy in Israel continues to work with the Joint Distribution Committee on this initiative.

Looking forward, 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen Belsen, and other concentration and death camps. The government will be actively involved in a busy programme of activities to mark this anniversary, spanning our own Holocaust Memorial Day events, as well as commemorations at the camps themselves. The Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission will publish recommendations in January. Within the IHRA, although we will be handing over the chairmanship to **Hungary** in March, we will continue to play an active role as the former chair. In particular, Sir Andrew will chair an international panel of experts to advise on the content of the new House of Fates museum in Budapest. IHRA member states reaffirmed in Manchester their continuing commitment to the undertakings they accepted 15 years ago in the Stockholm Declaration of 2000. This commitment will be reaffirmed in their public statements around Holocaust Memorial Day in 2015.

Anti-Muslim Hatred

Measures to combat hate crimes against Muslims at local community level were the focus of an expert meeting on 28 April 2014 in Vienna, organised jointly by the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The meeting brought together government officials, community leaders, civil society representatives and academics from 26 OSCE participating states. Iqbal Bhana from the UK's Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crimes spoke at the event.

During the meeting, participants discussed a number of projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing cooperation between law enforcement officers and Muslim communities to combat hate crimes, including training police about anti-Muslim prejudice, and measures to increase inclusiveness and diversity in law enforcement agencies.

We attach importance to the work that ODIHR does to combat anti-Muslim hatred, including through the delivery of training workshops for community leaders and civil society representatives, as well as policy advice and training for law enforcement personnel, on preventing, responding to, and reporting on hate crimes against Muslims.

We also raise anti-Muslim hatred in our bilateral contacts. A current example of anti-Muslim discrimination is that of **Burma**, and its 2015 elections, which represent both an opportunity and a risk for human rights (see above). The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors in Rakhine and, since 2012, we have provided £12 million in humanitarian aid, and a further £4.5 million towards projects that support livelihoods. We are also supporting work throughout Burma, including through projects aimed at assisting activists in tackling religious intolerance, including through interfaith dialogue.

The UK's cross-government Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group brings together leading representatives from the British Muslim community, academics, and government departments. Although a large part of the group's work is devoted to domestic issues, some of its activities have an international focus. After the rise of ISIL during 2014, the group discussed

what actions might be taken, and held meetings with local Imams.

The group extended its relationship with international organisations to work on a definition of anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia, and ways of addressing hatred on the internet. The UK continues to share best practice internationally, and is seen as an example of effective collaboration between government officials, police and civil society, who work together to combat hate crime. The Community Security Trust, a Jewish organisation with extensive experience in reporting antisemitic hate crime, has continued to assist the UK charity Faith Matters and its TELL MAMA reporting programme in further developing its data collection system.

Women's Rights

The promotion and protection of women's rights is enshrined in international human rights law, and it is essential for stable and prosperous societies, within which women fully participate in political, economic and social life. Without gender equality, development goals and poverty reduction cannot be fully realised. Without the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building, there can be no sustainable and equitable peace.

As FCO Minister for Middle East and North Africa, Tobias Ellwood, said in October, "when women face discrimination and are denied the freedoms we take for granted – like freedom of association and expression – all of society suffers; when women are denied an education, access to healthcare, and the chance to contribute to the economy – society suffers".

A partnership across government

Women's rights are a priority for the FCO. We work in many countries around the world, and at all relevant multilateral bodies to promote and protect them. It is why the FCO hosted the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and why the Department for International Development (DFID), the Home Office and the FCO worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the Prime Minister's Girl Summit on ending female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) – see case study below.

We often work in partnership with DFID to help translate political commitments, made by countries at the UN and obligations in their own laws and constitutions, into education, jobs, equal participation, and leadership positions for women. And we work to prevent victimisation and violence against women to ensure that they are a visible force in every society.

For example, the UK government played a significant role in pushing hidden, sensitive and neglected issues into the spotlight, including FGM (see Chapter IX for details on the UK's work on FGM for British nationals), sexual violence, and intimate partner violence in all contexts, including in humanitarian emergencies. In autumn 2014, a report showed that, since 2012, DFID had increased programming by 63% to address violence against women and girls – with a six-fold increase in humanitarian programming that includes prevention or response to gender-based violence.

Case Study: the Girl Summit – Ending Female Genital Mutilation and Child, Early and Forced Marriage

Female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) harm girls profoundly and permanently, denying them their right to make their own decisions and to reach their full potential.

FGM causes pain, risks in childbirth and emotional and psychological harm. Child marriage leads to early childbearing, which increases the likelihood of complications and death during childbirth. It also disrupts girls' education and exposes them to an increased likelihood of domestic violence.

Worldwide, more than 250 million women alive today were married before their 15th birthday, and over 125 million women currently live with the consequences of FGM.

The good news is that things are changing. This year, the UK supported strong, consensus UN resolutions on FGM and CEFM. The UK's Forced Marriage Unit, a joint FCO and Home Office unit, continues to provide support and assistance to victims of forced marriage. And in the heart of communities in the UK, Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and Europe, more and more people are saying no to these practices. There is also a growing African-led movement to end FGM and child marriage, with religious leaders, politicians and First Ladies speaking out. Our role is to support and accelerate these efforts.

It was in this spirit that, on 22 July, the Prime Minister hosted over 650 participants from 50 countries at the Girl Summit, the first ever global summit on ending FGM and CEFM, at London's Walworth Academy.

At the summit, the Prime Minister said that the event represented "the start of a global movement". Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai called on world leaders not to be "followers of those traditions that go against human rights". She stressed that "we are human beings and we make the traditions". This was echoed by government and civil society representatives who pledged to change laws and attitudes in equal measure, as exemplified by **Ethiopia's** commitment to eradicate FGM and CEFM totally by 2025.

To date, 480 organisations and individuals (including 42 governments) have signed the Girl Summit Charter, which sets out specific actions to end FGM and CEFM. Over 170 specific commitments have been made by a range of government and civil society actors, and more than \$90 million has been pledged to end these practices. Satellite events were held in **Kenya**, the US, **Uganda**, **Zimbabwe**, **India** and **Guinea-Bissau**. The UK also hosted #YouthForChange on 19 July, an event to inspire young people to act on girls' rights.

UK ambassadors and diplomatic staff in over 70 of our embassies and high commissions worked in close partnership with Department for International Development officials to ensure governments came to the summit prepared to make these commitments, that they were represented by senior ministers, and that as many key countries as possible signed the charter.

The FCO remains committed to building on the summit's success. We will continue to lobby states to sign the charter, and make further commitments to end FGM and CEFM that will prevent hundreds of millions more being robbed of their childhood and stripped of their rights.

FCO officials also attend regular meetings with other UK government departments to ensure that all our efforts are consistent and complementary, including meetings chaired by the Home Office to chart progress against the government's Violence Against Women Action Plan. Within this plan, the FCO has specific commitments, which include raising awareness of forced marriage and supporting the ratification and lobbying for the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

UK action at the multilateral level

The UK government worked hard during 2014 to ensure that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which is the UN's primary forum for promoting gender equality and the human rights of women and girls, called for the rights of women and girls to be reflected as a stand-alone goal, and to be integrated through targets and indicators into all goals of the new post-2015 development framework. This was a good outcome, achieved despite determined efforts from some countries to roll back previously agreed positions on women's rights. We also achieved robust language on UK priorities including: ending violence against women and girls; economic empowerment; leadership and participation in decision-

making; and ending harmful practices, including CEFM and FGM.

We successfully introduced similar language within UN Human Rights Council (HRC) resolutions on the elimination of discrimination against women, and on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. Our negotiators at the UK Missions in Geneva and New York also helped generate international momentum to end CEFM, including helping to find global consensus on two worthwhile resolutions at the HRC and in the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) Third Committee. During the Universal Periodic Review process, the UK raised women's rights, including CEDAW implementation, with **Afghanistan**, **El Salvador**, **New Zealand**, and **Vanuatu**.

A key element of women's empowerment is ensuring girls and women have voice, choice and control on matters of sex, marriage and having children. 2014 was the 20th anniversary of the International Conference on Population & Development (the "Cairo" declaration) that laid the basis of international agreements on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The UK played an active role in ensuring the Cairo agenda was reaffirmed at the UN this year, and that it will inform the post-2015 development framework. We

will continue to champion universal access to SRHR through discussions on the post-2015 development framework.

The UK leads on the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the UN Security Council and continues to champion it internationally. 2014 saw the launch of the UK's third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. As with the previous NAP, it continues to have bilateral focus covering **Afghanistan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Somalia and Syria**. 2014 also saw the launch of our first Implementation Plan (IP). This will be used to assess the impact of UK efforts on Women, Peace and Security throughout the life of this NAP, and will capture and report lessons to inform future activity. More detail on Women, Peace and Security, including the NAP and IP, is covered in its own section in this report.

Furthermore, the UK government continues to challenge the international community to do more to address sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies, most recently at the Call to Action event at the UNGA in September 2014, where the Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, called for increased efforts to protect vulnerable women and girls in the face of today's unprecedented humanitarian needs

UK action at country level

Whilst the international system is key to setting the standards, real change that breaks down discriminatory attitudes and

behaviour, and leads to better, more equitable and fairer lives for women, can only happen when states fully realise these standards. The FCO works around the world to ensure this is the case by addressing violence against women, and by promoting female economic emancipation and political participation.

In 2014, DFID supported an innovative mobile phone-based application called Safetipin, which gives users information on how safe an area is, and provides locations and numbers for services such as the police, hospital and taxi stands. The application has been rolled out in several cities, both in **India** and other countries. In **Guatemala**, an Embassy-supported project titled "Never Again" worked particularly with indigenous communities to tackle the taboos related to sexual violence in conflict, helping them overcome the effects it caused individually and socially. In the **Philippines**, we funded a project to build on the momentum of the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, and to ensure that the final law, which will bring this agreement into practice, is gender-sensitive. We are also working to understand how best to ensure Bangsamoro women are involved in the ensuing peace process, and hosted a summit one day before International Women's Day to entrench women's participation in the establishment of a new devolved government in Mindanao. In response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, DFID took action to ensure that its partners included protection of girls and women as part of its overall response. We deployed technical specialists in violence against girls and women to support the UN, coordinated efforts, and contributed £77

Case Study: India – Women's Rights

The World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index showed that India's ranking dropped from 101 out of 136 countries surveyed in 2013, to 114 out of 142 countries in 2014. Under-five female mortality exceeds male mortality by 20-30% in some districts across most Indian states, and rises to over 50% in parts of north-east India. Girls also have less access to education, and two out of three non-literate 15-24 year olds are female. Indian government data shows 35% of women in India (between the ages of 15-49) experienced physical violence.

The Indian Parliament has passed legislation to tackle these issues, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act and Rules 2013, and the Criminal Law Bill 2013. However, implementation challenges remain.

On 9 June, India's President Pranab Mukherjee made a commitment that the government would adopt a policy of "zero tolerance for violence against women". Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi used his Independence Day speech on 15 August to highlight the importance of women's safety and of changing boys' attitudes towards violence against women. Modi also committed to launching a campaign to educate young girls, improving opportunities for women and young girls, and setting up one-stop crisis centres across the country – the first being in Madhya Pradesh, enabling women to receive medical treatment, psychological counselling, and legal aid.

In August 2014, there were amendments made to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, including strengthening sentences for offences committed against children by juveniles, and making funds available for treatment of acid attack victims. Other developments include more girls entering education and improved maternal health.

The British government is committed to working with the Indian government on women's rights. DFID's India programme has a long-established record on empowering women. ATV series called "Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon" ("I, a woman, can achieve anything") supported by DFID, was launched in March 2014. It focused on issues such as gender-selective abortion, early marriage, and family planning, and the launch of a second season is planned for March 2015.

In March, the FCO, in conjunction with the Lawyers Collective Women's Rights Initiative, launched two booklets: "Locating the Survivor in the Indian Criminal Justice System: Decoding the Law" and "Frequently Asked Questions: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Violence." India's then Chief Justice pledged to distribute them to judges across India during the launch; and demand from NGOs meant we published Hindi language versions on Human Rights Day.

Empowerment of girls and women will continue to be a key priority in 2015. Our development partnership with India will be based on sharing skills and expertise, investing in private sector projects that benefit the poor whilst generating a return, and working together on global development issues.

We are human beings, we make the traditions so we should have the right to change those traditions.

Malala Yousafzai



Picture: Department for International Development
Inspiring words from Malala Yousafzai at the Girl Summit 2014.

million to the humanitarian response. DFID led a post-response lessons-learned review, with participation from UN and NGO partners, which produced recommendations for improvements on gender-based violence programming in future responses.

In **Brazil**, FCO funding helped develop a smartphone application called Smart Women App. This app provides routes to the nearest place to get help if threatened with violence, offers information regarding the Maria da Penha law on domestic violence, and provides access to a helpline. The initiative was later federalised by the Brazilian government and now reaches the whole country. In the **Dominican Republic**, the Embassy supported a project aimed at empowering women; the project won first prize at the GEM-Tech Awards 2014, which encourage young women from science, technology, engineering and mathematics clubs to continue their higher education.

We often make use of high-profile events to ensure our messages are heard and heeded. For example, a number of our Embassies and High Commissions marked International Women's Day, held on 8 March. The High Commission in **Jamaica** brought together 17 of Kingston's young, most forward-thinking and influential women to discuss the empowerment of women and girls in Jamaica. Among them were representatives of the media and two senators, one of whom had recently called for a parliamentary committee to consider gender quotas for political representation.

The FCO network made full use of International Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls Day on 25 November and the subsequent 16 Days of Activism. A host of initiatives marked the day, only some of which are recorded here. The British Embassy in Washington painted their red telephone box orange; in Brunei, staff wore orange; and in **France** our Embassy published a video blog on domestic violence which attracted over 1,000 views on Facebook and Twitter in a single day. In the **Seychelles**, our High Commission sponsored and took part in the "orange" march organised by the Ministry of Social Affairs that kicked off their 16 Days of Activism. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv engaged in two online campaigns: a local campaign called "I'm Changing", led by a civil society organisation, and the UN's UNiTE campaign to end violence against women. And, in Nairobi, our High Commissioner co-wrote an article with the **Australian** and **Canadian** High

Commissioners, saying that they would never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women, and that they encouraged all **Kenyan** men to join in this pledge.

Children's Rights

Violence, discrimination, poverty and marginalisation can impact children disproportionately, affect their health, education and overall development, and put them at an increased risk of exploitation, abuse and trafficking. With this in mind, the protection and promotion of children's human rights, including those of children who are victims of armed conflict and children at risk of abduction (on which there are specific sections contained in this report), form an important part of the FCO's wider international human rights agenda.

Much of our work is focused at the UN and at other international institutions. For example, in 2014, at the March HRC, the UK co-sponsored the annual resolution on the rights of the child, which had as its theme "access to justice for children". This called upon all states to translate into concrete action their commitment to remove any possible barriers to children's access to justice, including by adopting special protective measures to safeguard the rights of children in particularly vulnerable situations, and to ensure that children are able to participate in proceedings. During the June session of the HRC, we supported the renewal of the Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

At the UNGA, towards the end of 2014, we negotiated an omnibus child rights resolution in partnership with members of the Latin American Group of States. This was a mammoth task, taking seven rounds of negotiations and a large number of bilateral meetings over two months, to arrive at a final text for adoption. The final agreed text reaffirmed the general principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including that the best interests of the child, and non-discrimination for all children, should provide the framework for state actions concerning children.

In December, the FCO supported the government's #WeProtectChildren Online Summit to end child sexual exploitation. Delegations from more than 50 countries, 26 leading technology companies, and 10 NGOs took part in the two-day summit at Lancaster House in London. The summit agreed concrete global action to tackle online child sexual exploitation, and to establish strong partnerships with industry.

Participants agreed a coordinated global response to tackle the proliferation of child sexual abuse, and to remove material in circulation since the dawn of the internet, where millions of appalling images and videos remain available. They also unveiled a number of ground-breaking technological initiatives, which will make it much more difficult for criminals who seek to exploit the almost limitless potential of the digital age to abuse children for sexual purposes. World-leading UK measures included a new law making it illegal for an adult to send a sexual communication to a child; new joint teams, including staff from the National Crime Agency and the Government Communications Headquarters, which will specialise in online child sexual abuse; and a £50 million pledge over five years to

contribute to a newly established global child protection fund, administered by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) – the first of its kind.

Away from the multilateral world, our Embassies and High Commissions play an important role in our work to protect and promote the rights of children. They have a responsibility to monitor and raise human rights issues, including children's rights, in their host countries, to raise individual cases, and to lobby for changes to discriminatory practices and laws. The FCO will continue to raise child rights with other governments when necessary.

We also provide financial support to programme work to protect and promote the rights of all children, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, in **Guatemala**, the British Embassy supported civil society organisations in raising awareness of the harm child marriage causes, and promoting adoption of legislation that would raise the minimum marital age for girls. In **Fiji**, the British High Commission funded a two-day workshop attended by young people in the district of Solaira Tikina as part of the "All Women and Children Empowered Now" project, which aims to address the serious problem of gender violence through improved access to information and clinical reproductive health services. The **Kenyan** National Crime Agency, supported by the British High Commission in Nairobi, is running a campaign called "Every Child Matters". FCO funds will allow officers to carry out a strategic assessment of child protection issues in Kenya, run an awareness-raising workshop, and launch the International Child Protection Certificate. In December, two senior Kenyan delegates, funded by the FCO's Drugs and Crime Fund, attended the Prime Minister's London conference on ending child sexual exploitation. This will hopefully act as a catalyst for further concerted effort by the Kenyan government, and all other countries that attended, to tackle online abuse and safeguard children.

The terrorist group Boko Haram have committed numerous human rights abuses against children in **Nigeria**, including abductions and fatal bomb attacks targeting education establishments. The abduction of over 270 schoolgirls from Chibok on 14 April 2014 was a particularly heinous example of their brutality. The UK has increased its support to the Nigerian government to help locate the missing Chibok schoolgirls and tackle the threat posed by Boko Haram. We are also providing support to children in north-east Nigeria affected by the activities of Boko Haram. A joint DFID/USAID partnership will draw one million more schoolchildren in this region into education by 2020, which includes increased support for girls' education. In addition the UK has committed £1 million to the UN Safe Schools Initiative in Nigeria.

During 2015, we will continue to work actively to ensure that child rights are protected, including through the UN, and that child rights are taken into account in our work on a range of issues, including forced marriage and preventing sexual violence against children in conflict.



Picture: Department for International Development

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Rights

We believe that the international community must stand firm against all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and that we should all accept, respect and value diversity. This is why we and like-minded countries work through the UN to address discrimination and violence against LGBT people, and why we work with individual countries to review, revise and abolish discriminatory laws and policies.

We have seen some progress over the past year in many parts of the world. In many countries however, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender continue to experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and intolerance, including restrictions on their freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; discrimination in employment; restricted access to health services and

education; hate crime; torture, inhuman or degrading treatment; and, in some cases, violation of their right to life.

In addition to our work to ensure that the most basic and fundamental rights of LGBT&T people are protected, we have worked closely with the Government Equalities Office to encourage other countries to recognise same-sex marriages and civil partnerships conducted under the new UK law. A number of countries have already confirmed they will recognise UK marriages of same-sex couples (for example, **Canada, Denmark, France** and the **Netherlands**) and civil partnerships (**Argentina, Finland, Germany, and New Zealand**). Some other countries have permitted UK consulates overseas to carry out services of marriage locally, and these services are starting to be publicised on social media and in local media. We continue to press for mutual recognition.

We strongly supported the adoption of the UN's second ever resolution on sexual orientation at the HRC in September. The resolution, led by **Brazil, Chile, Colombia** and **Uruguay**, passed by a much bigger majority than the first resolution on this issue in 2011, and requests the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to write a follow-up report on

violence and discrimination on the basis of a person's sexual orientation and gender identity.

In this respect, we also warmly welcomed the personal commitment of the newly appointed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, to tackling discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as other forms of discrimination.

In 2014, the UK became a member of the UN LGBT&T Core Group in New York, an informal network of UN member states which ensure that the rights of LGBT&T persons are appropriately protected in UN fora. We actively participated in the group's activities, including taking part in high-level events on LGBT&T rights during the opening of the UNGA in September, and on respect for the diversity of families on Human Rights Day on 10 December. The core group and the UN jointly hosted a "Free and Equal Photo Booth" during the opening of the UNGA, where visiting diplomats, UN staff and friends and family had the opportunity to show their support for LGBT&T rights, and were offered the chance to publicise this through social media.

At the UNGA we continued to be a leading voice for the recognition of the rights of LGBT&T persons in relevant intergovernmental resolutions and decisions. We worked hard to retain language in the biennial resolution on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, which specifically calls for the protection of the right to life of all people, including those targeted on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We also supported language on non-discrimination and inclusion in resolutions on the rights of the child, bullying, sport for peace and development, and the relationship between the UN and the Council of Europe.

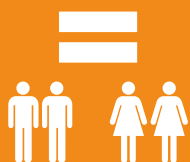
We warmly welcomed the decision of the UN Secretary-General to amend UN staff guidelines to recognise all legal unions of UN staff by reference to the law of the competent authority where it was established, and to ensure that benefits and protections for legal partners that come with employment at the UN are provided regardless of sexual orientation. We will continue to support the Secretary-General in this regard.

Throughout the year, we raised the importance of respect for LGBT&T rights at the HRC during the UPRs of **Cyprus, Dominica, Italy, San Marino** and **Uruguay**.

We continued to encourage the Commonwealth to do more to promote the rights of its LGBT&T citizens. In March, the former Foreign Secretary, William Hague, wrote to the Commonwealth Secretary-General urging him to take concrete action following developments in some member states which were contrary to their agreed commitments in the Commonwealth Charter. We welcomed the statements by the Secretary-General who called for the Commonwealth's values to be upheld in respect of sexual orientation and gender identity. FCO Minister for the Commonwealth, Hugo Swire, has repeatedly encouraged the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth member states to do more to realise this. More details of our approach to LGBT&T rights can be found in the section of this report on the Commonwealth.

We believe that the Commonwealth's non-governmental networks provide an excellent forum in which to discuss issues

The UK government is committed to advancing LGBT equality and challenging discrimination. Here are five ways we are making progress at home and abroad:



The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act received Royal Assent last year and the first marriages of same sex couples took place on 29 March 2014.

The Foreign Office has released guidance on how diplomats can promote the human rights of LGBT people in foreign posts.



In 2014 the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association's (ILGA) annual Rainbow Map ranked the UK as first in LGBT rights in Europe.

The UK government introduced legislation to disregard consensual gay sex convictions, under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.



The UK government published the world's first transgender equality action plan in December 2011, which lays out real actions to address the specific challenges that transgender people can face in their daily lives.

Country Case Study: The Gambia

The human rights situation in The Gambia has been in steady decline since 2012, when the government of President Jammeh broke its own moratorium on the death penalty and executed nine death-row prisoners. Rule of law, freedom of the press, arbitrary detentions, human trafficking, and recent legislation targeting LGBT people are all areas of concern. In October, the Gambian government reneged on its agreement to allow access to UN Special Rapporteurs investigating reports of torture and extrajudicial executions.

President Jammeh and his government have a poor record on LGBT rights. In April 2013, the Gambian National Assembly passed the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act allowing a prison term of five years to any male found guilty of dressing in female clothing. Homosexual acts were already criminalized under Gambian law, with “acts of gross indecency” between two persons of the same sex carrying a five-year sentence, while “carnal acts” carried a 14-year jail term. In February 2014, he used his Independence Day speech to state: “LGBT can only stand for Leprosy, Gonorrhoea, Bacteria and Tuberculosis; all of which are detrimental to human existence.”

In early 2014, President Jammeh called for additional legislation to protect Gambian “traditional values and religious sensitivities”. This led to the Gambian National Assembly unanimously passing the Aggravated Homosexuality Bill in August 2014, which was lifted word for word from the **Ugandan** Anti-Homosexuality Act (which has since been annulled by the Ugandan Constitutional Court). The word “aggravated” appears only in the title of the

amendment, but as there is no definition for the terms used, it is unclear what this means. The law states that those who commit acts of homosexuality as “serial offenders” will be subject to life imprisonment. The term “serial offender” is worryingly vague, and could be applied to consensual activity between same-sex partners. The discriminatory nature of the new legislation, its harsh sentencing, and lack of clarity over application sets The Gambia apart from other regional countries on LGBT issues.

The legislation was signed off by President Jammeh on 9 October and publicly confirmed on 19 November. The first test case took place in December, when three men were charged with “engaging in homosexual activity” in violation of the Criminal Code’s “aggravated homosexuality” provision. The case is ongoing.

Under the EU Cotonou Agreement with The Gambia, development assistance is dependent on progress on human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law. Progress is reviewed through regular dialogue held twice a year. The most recent meeting was scheduled to take place on 11 November, but was postponed by the Gambian government. On 26 November, President Jammeh decided to suspend all further discussions with the EU.

Both the EU and the US have published statements condemning the Aggravated Homosexuality Bill. In December, the EU decided to halt its development aid to The Gambia due to the Gambian government’s failure to improve its human rights. We will continue to press The Gambia to engage on human rights issues both bilaterally and through the EU.

that are difficult to discuss at an intergovernmental level. In 2014 we made good use of these networks – academic, professional and civil society – to increase the debate on a wide range of human rights issues, including on LGBT rights.

Our Embassies and High Commissions continue to lobby at the highest levels on LGBT rights, particularly in countries where same-sex relations are criminalised. They also fund projects and support local LGBT civil society groups.

We welcomed the decision of the **Ugandan** Constitutional Court to annul the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda in August, and continue to raise our concerns with the Ugandan government about any new legislation which could lead to persecution and discrimination against LGBT people. In **The Gambia**, we were appalled by the continued rhetoric against LGBT people, including President Jammeh’s statement on 18 February. The UK and the EU High Representative issued a statement on 21 February deploring the President’s statement. We remain deeply concerned by the Aggravated Homosexuality Bill that was confirmed publicly on 19 November, and we worked closely with the EU on a statement condemning the bill when it was published. In **Nigeria**, we were disappointed by the assent given in January to the Same-Sex Marriage Bill that further criminalised same-sex relationships. Mr Hague said on 15 January that, “We are concerned by the prospect this raises of further action against an already marginalised section of society”.

These new pieces of legislation are part of a wider trend of legislation and violence against LGBT people across Sub-Saharan Africa. This new legislation focuses on the promotion of homosexuality and the funding of civil society groups. We remain in regular contact with LGBT communities and civil society both locally and in the UK, and raise our concerns at the highest levels. We will continue to support training, advocacy, and legal cases related to the protection of LGBT rights across Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Caribbean, we have supported civil society’s defence of LGBT rights, including through a regional workshop for LGBT rights defenders. This workshop focused on promoting international dialogue and training on LGBT human rights issues, strengthening the Caribbean response, linking regional and international advocacy around the world, and documenting human rights abuses. In **Jamaica**, we worked with the Jamaican police to improve the investigation of complaints and set up a public forum to tackle homophobic bullying in schools. We also worked with the UK civil society organisation, Kaleidoscope, on a project in Trinidad & Tobago that encouraged public and political support for progress towards the repeal of legislation discriminating against LGBT citizens.

A number of Embassies and High Commissions across the globe marked the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) in May by holding events with civil society and local LGBT organisations. Staff also attended Pride marches and organised events around them. Examples

in 2014 included a pre-Pride reception to mark Delhi Queer Pride, and a video blog by our High Commissioner in Pretoria. In Trinidad & Tobago, the High Commission has facilitated bi-monthly safe space coffee mornings for the LGB&T community, with discussions on how they can best defend their rights.

In **China**, we have been a consistent and influential supporter of LGB&T rights. Our support through messaging on online channels, micro-funding of civil society groups, and prominent annual displays of the rainbow flag for IDAHOT, has positioned us a trusted defender of LGB&T rights by LGB&T persons in China.

We were pleased that **Serbia** hosted a successful Pride Parade in September. Embassy staff, including our Ambassador, took part. This was the first such parade since 2010, when the event was marred by violent clashes between groups of protestors and police. This year the British Embassy in Belgrade, as part of its wider work to encourage respect for LGB&T rights, worked with Dutch colleagues to coordinate international political support for the civil society groups organising the parade.

Looking ahead to 2015, we will continue to work to ensure that no-one is persecuted or discriminated against on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We will remain an active member of the UN LGB&T Core Group and continue to support civil society groups in their work.

Protecting LGB&T rights is also important for poverty reduction – where people are marginalised due to their sexuality they are more likely to be poor. UK Aid is used to support an environment in which all people can claim their rights and share in the benefits of development, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. In November 2014, DFID finalised a new strategic approach to working on LGB&T issues, and is building new partnerships with civil society, faith groups and the private sector, which can all play an effective role influencing decision-makers and changing social norms and attitudes. Through support to the Institute of Development Studies “Sexuality, poverty and the law” research programme, toolkits and guidance material is being produced to assist development practitioners.

Disability Rights

The UK government is committed to creating opportunities for disabled people that enable them to achieve their potential as fully participating members of society, whilst removing barriers which impede this. The FCO supports international initiatives which help realise this vision for all disabled people around the world.

We believe that wider ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified by 151 countries at the time of writing) remains key in this regard. As such, we continue to advocate for states to sign and ratify the convention. We do this through instruments such as the UPR at the HRC.

We were pleased that the disability rights legacy of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games was visible in Sochi, reaffirming the power of sport to deliver the empowering vision of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities. It was good to see **Russia** following through on its commitment made in the UK-drafted Olympic and Paralympic Games communiqué of 2012, in which Russia, **Brazil** and the **Republic of Korea** pledged to use their games to promote and embed respect for disability rights.

The British Embassy in Moscow and the **Russian** disability civil society organisation (CSO) “Perspektiva” also supported the visit of two British Paralympic athletes to Moscow. The Paralympians met school children at an inclusive education school and shared experiences with a group of young leaders with disabilities. With our support, Perspektiva is building a legal advocacy network of disability NGOs to support people with disabilities in eight Russian regions.

The FCO is also helping to improve the situation of people with disabilities in **China**, supporting families with autistic children in Xinjiang, and providing social activities for mentally disabled children and their parents in Gansu. Chinese and UK experts held a workshop on disability rights as part of the 21st UK-China Human Rights Dialogue held in May.

We believe that progressive outcomes from international bodies are key to ensuring a robust international approach to disability rights which will filter down to the national level. The UK is therefore active on disability rights in a number of multilateral bodies.

We consistently advocate special consideration of the rights of persons with disabilities in all relevant UN intergovernmental negotiations. Officials at the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York engaged actively at the UN General Assembly’s Third Committee (on social, humanitarian and cultural issues) and during the Commission on Social Development to agree resolutions focused specifically on promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The UK co-sponsored resolutions that highlighted the need to realise the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally-agreed development goals for persons with disabilities, and to mainstream disability in the UN development agenda beyond 2015. We also remained strong advocates for national and international data collection systems that disaggregate relevant data by age, sex, and disability, in order to improve policy formulation and service delivery for persons with disabilities.

At the March HRC in Geneva, the UK co-sponsored a resolution on the right of persons with disabilities to education in line with Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We also joined the EU’s statement during the Council’s Annual Discussion on Persons with Disabilities.

Looking forward, we will continue our London Olympic and Paralympic disability legacy work with a high-level dialogue between the UK and **Brazil** in March 2015. The dialogue will help realise commitments made in 2012 by President Dilma and the Prime Minister, David Cameron, to share experience and cooperation in staging the games, and to ensure accessibility and wider disability rights are factored into them. See also Chapter VII for details on disability rights at the Brazil World Cup.

The FCO will work with DFID to explore how our actions to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities can better complement DFID's new disability framework, launched on 3 December. The framework sets out how DFID will strengthen inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities across UK government development programmes, including through bilateral and multilateral partners. This includes specific new commitments to strengthen disability inclusion in humanitarian response, water and sanitation programmes, violence against women and girls programmes, as well as to strengthen national level data on disability and building staff expertise on disability inclusion.

Indigenous Rights

Indigenous people continue to be amongst the poorest and most marginalised in the world. As such, we continue to work overseas and through multilateral institutions to improve the situation of indigenous people, and continue to provide political and financial support for the economic, social and political development of indigenous people around the world

We continue to call on those states that have indigenous populations to sign and implement the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), and to ensure other relevant safeguards are in place, through international human rights mechanisms such as the UPR. In this regard, we believe that the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples that took place in New York on 22 and 23 September provided an important venue that ensured indigenous people's voices were heard and heeded as they again called for the realisation of the DRIP. We were pleased that this was reflected in the conference outcome document along with a call for an effective UN-wide approach to indigenous issues.

British Embassies and High Commissions monitor human rights in their host countries, and routinely raise our concerns with their governments. In 2014, they have continued to work with international and local NGOs on a variety of UK-funded projects to encourage local communities to participate more actively in the democratic process. For example, in **Colombia**, we worked with women's civil society groups and indigenous communities to create community networks to prevent sexual violence and provide support to victims, whilst promoting coordination between indigenous authorities and local government to strengthen referral mechanisms and improve access to services for victims (further details are contained in the section of the report on preventing sexual violence). In **Bolivia**, we continue to work with EU partners to ensure indigenous communities are protected, and we are supporting projects on police and prison reform, as well as on strengthening the judiciary. All of these elements directly impact indigenous people's access to justice. In **Brazil**, we are working with EU partners to help empower and protect indigenous communities, especially through the joint human rights defenders (HRDs) project between the EU and the human rights secretariat of the Brazilian government.

More widely, we continue to emphasise the importance for indigenous people of sustainable development and the preservation of the natural environment, given that their quality and way of life strongly depend on natural resources. In line

with our commitment to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as articulated in our 2013 Action Plan on Business and Human Rights which we are implementing across government, we continue to promote responsible business behaviour on the part of UK companies operating in the UK and internationally. We encourage UK companies to engage with those who may be affected at all stages of project design and implementation, in a manner that ensures free and informed participation and takes into account potential barriers to effective engagement, paying particular attention to indigenous people and other groups.

Racism

The UK government remains committed to tackling all forms of racial intolerance and discrimination, and to standing up for victims of racism around the world. The fight against racism is integral to the UK's human rights policy.

The UK plays an active part in the key international institutions fighting racism. The UK is represented on the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) by an independent expert, Michael Whine MBE, Government and International Affairs Director at the Community Security Trust. ECRI is a human rights body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts, which monitors problems of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as race, national/ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language (racial discrimination). It prepares reports and issues recommendations to member states. ECRI is currently engaged in drafting a General Policy Recommendation on Hate Speech, and is re-invigorating its third area of responsibility, which is with specialised bodies and expert CSOs.

We continued to work through the UN to ensure that states take practical measures to implement HRC Resolution 16/18 (combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatisation of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief), which focuses the international community on combating religious intolerance, protecting the human rights of minorities, and promoting pluralism in society.

In 2014, the UK negotiated constructively with international partners the text of UN Resolution 68/237 – relating to the International Decade for People of African Descent. We hope that the decade, which commenced on 1 January 2015, will be used to galvanise efforts to implement existing commitments and make concrete progress to tackle racism in all parts of the world. During 2015 and beyond, we will seek to ensure the international community focuses on strengthening national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination, and ensuring their full and effective implementation. We also hope the decade will enable the UN, member states, civil society, and all other relevant actors to join with people of African descent to take effective measures for the implementation of the programme of activities.

The UK supports the work of the UN in tackling racism. Our priority in international discussions is to focus on the real and pressing problems faced by racial minorities in all parts of the world. Along with our EU partners, we sought to ensure that the UN addressed racism through its various processes and mechanisms.

The UK remains committed to fulfilling its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The government believes that strong and effective laws already exist in the UK under which individuals may seek enforceable remedies in the courts or tribunals, if they feel that their rights have been breached. We do not therefore believe that ratification of the Optional Protocol is necessary.

We will continue to remain vigilant to any manifestations of racism, and work actively with international partners to ensure that the aims of equality and non-discrimination are advanced through the multilateral system and bilaterally.

Roma

Any form of discrimination or ill treatment on the ground of someone's identity is unacceptable. The UK works at the international level to stand against intolerance towards the Roma/Sinti, who in certain cases across Europe are still subjected to violence, denied access to employment, excluded from health care, and forced to live in segregated housing. We work through experts in international organisations and through our network of embassies to confront this issue.

The government believes it is important the international community works together to assist national and local authorities in combating anti-Roma discrimination and promoting integration. However, individual states have responsibility for tackling inequality between Roma and non-Roma communities in their own countries. In the EU, Roma is an umbrella term which includes groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, and Gens du voyage.

The genocide of the Roma at the hands of the Nazis and their allies during the Second World War, and its implications for the community today, is a lesser known chapter in European history. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which is covered in more detail in the Post-Holocaust Issues section of this report, includes in its thematic mandate the genocide of the Roma and other issues, such as genocide prevention. As Chair of the IHRA during 2014, the UK encouraged member countries to report on activities aimed at remembering the Roma genocide, and to include experts on the Roma genocide in their national delegations. We were delighted that the IHRA's Committee on the Roma Genocide, in cooperation with the Institute of Education, University of London, organised a conference in May to bring together many of the organisations active in research and project work in this area. Preserving the memory of and raising awareness about the genocide plays an important role in combating anti-Roma sentiment in the world today. As in previous years, British Embassies in countries across Europe took part in commemorations to mark the Roma Genocide on 2 August.

As well as running projects, British Embassies in the region have also engaged in regular dialogue with Roma communities and local and central government in order to combat discrimination and marginalisation. In June, the British Embassy in **Slovenia** attended a conference organised by the European and Slovenian Roma associations. The conference focused mainly on the situation of Roma in the EU. There were 15 countries represented in 2014 and, unlike 2013, the conference included representatives from Western Europe, rather than just the Western Balkans and Central Europe.

In **Bulgaria**, the Embassy maintained contacts with a number of Roma NGOs to support their work. For example, it launched a project to promote education among Roma girls, which included a campaign to compare the lives of two Roma women – one dropping out of school and getting married at a very young age, the other becoming a medical doctor and starting a family in her twenties. In November, the Deputy Head of Mission opened the conference, entitled "Successful models for empowering Roma women and young people".

In **Romania**, the Embassy sponsored a project to train Romanian Roma local councilors in Yorkshire and the surrounding area. They also supported a local NGO in a project focusing on a new local rural mixed community in Cluj county.

In **Slovakia**, the Embassy funded the training of social workers on the prevention of human trafficking. The course was aimed mainly at social workers working with poor Roma communities living in eastern Slovakia.

In **Hungary**, the Embassy sponsored four main projects in this field. In March, it organised a Fourth Human Rights Movie Day, focusing on current social questions, and emphasising the work individuals and organisations had done to promote human rights in Hungary. In between the films, roundtable discussions took place about the films and some of the most pressing human rights issues of today's Hungary. Also in March, the Embassy sponsored the purchase of new office equipment for the Roma Police Union. The organisation actively works on recruiting young Roma to the Hungarian police force as well as breaking down prejudices about Roma and criminality. In November, for the fourth time in a row, the Embassy organised an in-house collection (clothes, books, toys, non-perishable food items) for the impoverished Roma community of the town of Versend in the south of Hungary. In December, the Embassy sponsored a Roma student mentoring/twinning programme run by the Real Pearl Foundation, who have long supported the education, talent development and integration of socially disadvantaged and Roma children/families. Through their year-long "twinning education" programme, carefully selected teacher trainees from Budapest universities are paired up with students or a small group of underperforming, poor Roma students in south-east Hungary to help them with their studies and their overall integration process.

Embassies in relevant countries will continue to be active in this area in 2015. We will continue to support the work of the IHRA's Committee on the Roma Genocide.

CHAPTER VII: Human Rights in Safeguarding the UK's National Security

Counter- Terrorism

International terrorism remains one of the greatest security challenges we face today. It confronts us with gross abuses of human rights, such as the atrocities carried out by the so-called Islamic State for Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, Boko Haram and others. During the course of 2014, terrorist groups carried out attacks that resulted in the murder, rape and torture of thousands of unprotected civilians.

In order to combat terrorism in an effective and sustainable way, we must build stability and promote human rights and the rule of law in other countries. This requires us to live up to our values and obligations at all times, and demand that our partners do the same. This includes being clear that torture and other mistreatment are unacceptable. Failing to do so is counter-productive, can cause future generations to become radicalised, and ultimately fuels more terrorist activity.

The UK's counter-terrorism work overseas protects our security and upholds human rights at the same time. To ensure this, all our counter-terrorism capacity-building work is assessed against the government's Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) Guidance.

Working in partnership

A central strand of our work overseas is developing justice and human rights partnerships with countries where there are both threats to the UK's security and weaknesses in law enforcement, human rights and the criminal justice architecture. These partnerships provide a systematic process for identifying shortcomings in capability, and addressing these through the provision of UK assistance and expertise.

These and other capacity-building projects generally focus on working with the police, prosecutors, judges and prison authorities to build their capacity to investigate, detain, prosecute and convict terrorists, based on respect for human rights and the rule of law. During the course of 2014, our assistance has both helped partners to disrupt terrorist attacks and improved the evidential and human rights standards of several counter-terrorism systems.

Counter-Terrorism Programme

The Counter-Terrorism Programme Fund (CTPF) is one of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's (FCO) largest strategic programmes. The allocation for 2013-14 was £15 million.

The main areas of focus in the programme in 2014 were on developing justice and human rights partnerships, increasing protective security around airports and vulnerable targets overseas, and work to prevent and tackle extremism and radicalisation. The programme aims to help tackle the threat to British nationals, in the UK and overseas. An integral part of this is strengthening the professionalism and human rights standards of overseas partners.

Deportation with Assurances

Deportation with Assurances (DWA) has enabled the UK to reduce the threat from terrorism by allowing foreign nationals, who pose a risk to our national security, to be deported, while still meeting our domestic and international human rights obligations.

Our DWA arrangements include public and verifiable assurances which have been, and continue to be, tested by the courts. They are set out in agreements between the UK and the country concerned. These include specific assurances for each individual returned, and nomination of a monitoring body, usually a local independent non-governmental organisation (NGO) or national human rights institution, to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement in each case. The government will not remove someone if there are substantial grounds for believing that they will face a risk of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in their home country, or where there is a significant risk that the death penalty will be applied.

In 2014 we had functioning DWA arrangements with **Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia and Morocco**. To date, the UK has removed 12 individuals under these arrangements. While no deportations took place in 2014, we continued to progress the case of W & Others (Algerian nationals) and a Court of Appeal judgment is expected in early 2015. Monitoring by local independent NGOs of compliance with the specific assurances also continued to take place in 2014. In Jordan, VV and Abu Qatada were acquitted of local charges and released from detention by the Jordanian courts. We will continue to pursue further deportations and expect overseas visits by the UK Special Representative for DWA in support of this aim in 2015.

Guantánamo Bay

The UK government believes that indefinite detention in Guantánamo Bay is wrong, and that the detention facility should be closed. In 2014 President Obama reiterated his commitment to closing the facility. In total, 28 detainees were transferred out of Guantánamo Bay in 2014, to **Algeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Georgia, Uruguay, Afghanistan** and **Kazakhstan**. 127 prisoners remain. The UK supports President Obama's continuing commitment to closing the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay.

UK efforts to secure the release and return of the last former legal UK resident, Shaker Aamer, continued throughout 2014. Senior members of the government, including the Foreign and Defence Secretaries, raised Mr Aamer's case with their US counterparts and made it clear that we want Mr Aamer released and returned to the UK as a matter of urgency.

Senior officials also continued to engage in an active dialogue with the US regarding Mr Aamer's case. Notwithstanding the government's best endeavours, any decision regarding Mr Aamer's release remains in the hands of the US government. Ministers and officials will continue to work with the United States government in 2015 to secure his release and return to the UK.

Oversight of the Agencies

The UK has one of the strongest systems of checks and balances and democratic accountability for secret intelligence anywhere in the world. The oversight regime was strengthened

in 2013 through the Justice and Security Act, which further reinforced the parliamentary and independent oversight of the Agencies – in particular through extending the statutory remit of the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) and the Intelligence Services Commissioner. In 2014, the UK government introduced emergency legislation (the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act) to clarify a number of existing investigatory powers. Several new safeguards were included as part of the legislation, including more regular reporting by the Interception of Communications Commissioner. The government also invited the Independent Reviewer of Counter-Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC, to undertake an independent review of the powers. This will be followed by a parliamentary review of investigatory powers legislation in the next parliament.

Consolidated Guidance

The government's position on torture is clear – we do not participate in, solicit, encourage or condone the use of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment for any purpose.

Guidance on this continues to be set out in the Consolidated Guidance to Intelligence Officers and Service Personnel on the Detention and Interviewing of Detainees Overseas, and on the Passing and Receipt of Intelligence Related to Detainees. Compliance with the Consolidated Guidance is monitored by the Intelligence Services Commissioner, who has independent judicial oversight of the conduct of the Intelligence Agencies. On November 27 2014, the Prime Minister, David Cameron,

Country Case Study: Nigeria – Boko Haram and the Fight against Terrorism

We estimate that, in 2014, more than 4,000 people were killed in Boko Haram attacks, and 900 people kidnapped in Nigeria. This included the abduction of over 270 schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno State on 14 April. The UN estimates that over 1.5 million people have been displaced, and at least three million have been affected by the insurgency in north-east Nigeria.

In 2014, there were increased reports of attacks by Boko Haram and counter-attacks by Nigerian armed forces in towns and villages across north-east Nigeria. Much of the violence has been concentrated in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States, but there have also been serious terrorist attacks outside these states, such as in Abuja, Jos, Kaduna, and Kano, leading to the death and injury of civilians. Serious human rights abuses perpetrated by Boko Haram include the bombing of public places and religious buildings, the abduction of women and children, the execution of those suspected of aiding the authorities, and fatal attacks on schools and colleges. A Human Rights Watch report in October highlighted Boko Haram's violence against women and girls in north-east Nigeria, including sexual violence and forced marriage. A number of NGOs have alleged that serious human rights violations have been committed by the Nigerian Security Forces, including extrajudicial killings and torture. In August, Amnesty International and the Channel 4 "Dispatches" programme claimed that Nigerian military personnel and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in northern Nigeria had perpetrated extrajudicial killings. Many of these cases were linked to the Boko Haram attack on Giwa barracks in March, and the response by the Nigerian Security Forces.

Nigerian military courts have found 66 Nigerian military personnel guilty of mutiny and sentenced them to death. The legal process, including appeals, continues. We have made clear to the Nigerian authorities the UK's opposition to the death penalty in all cases.

We are currently providing a substantial package of military, intelligence, and development support to Nigeria to help it tackle the threat from Boko Haram. UK military assistance includes training and advice to Nigerian units subsequently deployed against Boko Haram. All military assistance provided to Nigeria by the UK is strictly assessed under the UK government's OSJA Guidance.

We continue to encourage Nigeria to respond constructively to reports of human rights violations by its security forces, and to launch credible investigations into allegations. We have been clear that if members of the military and security forces or CJTF are found to have been involved in human rights violations, they should be brought to justice.

We are also providing support to the large numbers of people displaced by the conflict in north-east Nigeria. In 2014, the UK contributed £1.7 million to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department programmes in Nigeria. A further £1 million was provided by the Department for International Development to the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide humanitarian assistance to those in dire need.

gave direction under section 59A of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 specifically placing this element of the Commissioner's work on a statutory footing.

Detainee Inquiry

The government remains absolutely committed to ensuring that serious allegations of UK complicity in alleged mistreatment and rendition of detainees held by other countries overseas are examined carefully. In July 2010, Mr. Cameron asked Sir Peter Gibson, a former senior Court of Appeal judge, to lead an inquiry into whether Britain was implicated in the improper treatment, or rendition, of detainees held by other countries in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001.

Due to related police investigations, the Detainee Inquiry had to halt its work in January 2012. The then Minister Without Portfolio, Kenneth Clarke, presented the Report of the Detainee Inquiry's preliminary work to Parliament on 19 December 2013. As the inquiry was not able to hear from witnesses, the report did not make findings as to what happened or draw conclusions. Nevertheless, the report is a substantial piece of work, and the product of an extensive independent analysis of some 20,000 relevant documents, some of which had not been examined by any previous review. The report highlights themes and issues for further examination.

The government has asked the ISC to inquire into the themes and issues raised by the Detainee Inquiry, take further evidence, and report to the government and to Parliament on the outcome of their work. Additional resources have been made available to the ISC to assist them with this task, and work on analysing the primary material is underway. On 11 September 2014, the committee issued a public call for evidence. The ISC will remain open, throughout the course of its work, to constructive inputs from all interested parties.

The ISC has said publicly that the scale of its examination into detainee treatment is such that it will not be completed before the General Election in May 2015, when the committee will, in the usual way, be dissolved at the end of this Parliament. It would fall to the new members of the ISC, when it is reconvened in the next Parliament, to complete the work and make the judgements which will underpin its conclusions and recommendations. In light of the ISC report and the outcome of the related police investigations, the government will then be able to take a final view on whether another judge-led inquiry is necessary, in order to add any further information of value to future policy-making in this area and the national interest.

Countering proliferation of conventional weapons

The UK defence sector is a vital part of our industrial base. It helps responsible states to meet their legitimate defence and security needs. However, we recognise there is a risk that governments intent on internal repression or territorial expansion, international terrorist organisations, or organised crime networks may seek to acquire weapons, either legally or illegally. We therefore remain committed to ensuring that the legitimate arms trade is properly regulated, both in the UK and internationally.

The entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 24 December 2014 was a historic moment. For the first time, countries have agreed to be bound by international rules governing everything from small arms to warships. The UK was at the forefront of the process to develop the treaty from the start, and was one of the first states to sign the ATT on 3 June 2013 and to ratify it on 2 April 2014. The treaty was the result of outstanding collaboration between the government, civil society and industry, and represents the culmination of over 10 years of work within the UN system to place human rights and international humanitarian law at the heart of decisions about the arms trade. If these rules are implemented globally and effectively, they have the power to stop arms from reaching terrorists and criminals, and fuelling conflict and instability around the world.

Our top priority now is to continue to support states in acceding to and implementing the treaty, and to ensure the success of the first Conference of States Parties to be held in 2015. We are working closely with partners and supporters of the treaty to ensure that the conference decides on robust and sustainable structures and processes to support the treaty (for example, location and format of the Secretariat). This will include advice as well as implementation assistance funding, and we are likely to provide more than £350,000 in 2014-15 for this purpose.

Export licensing

Properly regulated, a responsible arms trade helps countries to meet their legitimate defence and security needs. Exports of defence and security equipment help governments to protect their citizens and protect their fundamental freedoms. The UK's export licensing system is one of the most rigorous and transparent regimes in the world. We do export licensable equipment to countries which feature as countries of concern in this report, not least because many licensable goods have perfectly legitimate civilian uses; they are used in car manufacturing, life sciences research, or to build mobile phone networks. However, we will not issue an export licence if there is a clear risk that the proposed export might be used for internal repression, including in our countries of concern. Furthermore, the UK's commercial relationships do not and will not prevent us from speaking frankly and openly to the governments of these countries about issues of concern, including human rights.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is the licensing authority for strategic arms exports from the UK. The FCO acts as a policy advisor, providing BIS with advice and analysis of the foreign policy aspects relevant to the consideration of each export licence application. The Department for International Development (DFID), Ministry of Defence (MOD), HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) also provide policy advice to BIS. Around 17,000 export licence applications were processed in 2014. Each application is assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. These criteria are based on an EU Common Position, and Criterion 2 is specifically intended to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country of final destination.

This stipulates that the government will “not issue an export licence if there is a clear risk that the proposed export might be used for internal repression”. This is a mandatory criterion which means that, if it is judged that such a clear risk exists, the government must refuse the licence and may not take into account any other factors.

When making export licensing decisions, the government examines the political and security conditions in the destination country, and assesses the capabilities and possible uses of the equipment to be exported. Assessment also considers the nature of the organisation or unit which will be the ultimate user of the equipment (including its track record on respecting human rights), taking account of all available information about how similar equipment has been used in the past, and how it is likely to be used in the future. Advice is sought from FCO experts in the UK and in Embassies and High Commissions overseas, technical experts in BIS, GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) and the MOD, and reports from NGOs and the media are taken into account. Any applications considered sensitive or finely-balanced are submitted to ministers for a final decision before the FCO provides advice to BIS on whether to approve or refuse a licence.

An example of how the “clear risk” test under Criterion 2 features in FCO assessments can be seen in relation to policing equipment including radios and body armour. If the government has concerns about how internal security agencies police demonstrations, or monitor political dissent in a potential destination country, and there is a clear risk of human rights violations in which exports might play a part, a licence might not be issued. This decision would be taken on the basis of an assessment both of what is happening in the destination country at the time the export licence application is received, and whether there is any evidence that the authorities are tackling the areas of concern.

Once approved, export licences are kept under review. The government has access to a wide range of daily reporting, including from its global network of diplomatic missions overseas. This enables the government to respond swiftly to changes in risk. The government can and does deploy a “suspension mechanism” for extant licences and new licensing in circumstances where we have concerns about political and security developments in a country of destination for an export licence; for example, where the security situation is unclear, fluid or changing rapidly, and where it is not possible to make a licensing decision. The suspension mechanism was applied to export licences for **Ukraine** in 2014. In February 2014, the UK with its EU partners agreed to suspend licences and new licensing for exports of equipment that might be used for internal repression in Ukraine. As a result, the government suspended 27 licences. Later in the year, the situation in Ukraine had changed substantially and we agreed with our EU partners to lift the suspension. The government continues to assess all licences for Ukraine on a case-by-case basis against the consolidated criteria.

In 2013 (the last complete year for which statistics are available), 44 export licences, out of a total of over 13,578 issued, were refused under Criterion 2. Case studies based

on actual export licence applications are published in the government’s Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls (the 2014 edition is due in July 2015). These demonstrate how human rights and other considerations are factored into assessments, and provide an insight into how the government assesses licence applications on a case-by-case basis.

Cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines

The UK government is committed to ending the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. These munitions indiscriminately threaten the lives of civilians across many parts of the world, particularly in areas of former conflict. Dealing with them is critical for allowing people to live in safety, as well as for the development of affected areas’ economy and society. The UK works to this end diplomatically through engaging in international treaties, and in practical support through DFID Mine Action programmes.

The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) prohibits the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer of cluster munitions. The UK became the 32nd State Party to the CCM in 2010. The UK withdrew all cluster munitions from operational service in 2008, and in December 2013 destroyed the last of its cluster munitions, five years ahead of the CCM deadline.

Similarly, the UK has been a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention) since 1998. One of our obligations under the Ottawa Convention is to clear all remaining anti-personnel mines laid during the Falklands War. We continue to de-mine the Falkland Islands, and in 2014 began mobilisation for the largest de-mining project there so far. The clearance phase of this project will start in early 2015.

Through DFID’s global Mine Action programmes, the UK has long been a leading international donor of work to clear mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. Following the end of a £38 million programme from 2010-2013, in 2014 we began our next three-year programme in **Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka** and **Mozambique**. We plan to expand operations into additional countries in 2015. Over the course of the next three years, these mine action projects will destroy thousands of mines, cluster munition remnants and other explosive remnants of war, returning land safely to communities across the world. The projects will also provide risk education to hundreds of thousands of people and help build the capacity of national authorities to manage their own programmes.

In 2015, we will continue to work diplomatically to pursue the goal of a world free of the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, by encouraging all states to refrain from the use of such weapons. Over the course of the year, the UK will expand the reach of our global Mine Action programmes, continue de-mining the Falkland Islands and, in September 2015, we will play an active part at the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Reducing Conflict and Building Stability Overseas

The Conflict Pool (CP)

The CP is a joint fund for conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping support, managed by the FCO, DFID and the MOD. CP programmes support the UK's conflict prevention priorities as set out in the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS). The focus is to invest in upstream prevention, as well as rapid crisis prevention and response, helping to build strong, legitimate institutions and robust societies in fragile countries with the aim of lowering the likelihood of instability in the future. The CP works closely with other bilateral actors, the international system (including the UN and African Union) and civil society to fill gaps and complement the efforts of others in fragile and conflict-affected states.

In 2014-15, CP funding has been used to help support the following:

- > building free, transparent and inclusive political systems;
- > building effective and accountable security and justice sectors;
- > security sector reform and capacity building in international organisations (including military reform);
- > increasing the capacity of governments, local populations and regional/multilateral institutions to prevent and resolve conflict;
- > anti-corruption initiatives; and
- > the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI).

The CP's budget for 2014-15 (excluding peacekeeping) was £239 million. It operates through regional programmes in **Afghanistan**, Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and wider Europe, which were responsible for disbursing the CP funding allocated to them.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the CP funds work in **Yemen** to increase the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to work with government representatives to promote more gender-sensitive security provision. In **Israel** and the **Occupied Palestinian Territories** we continue to promote respect for human rights through work with local Israeli and Palestinian implementing partners, and by building constituencies for peace within Israel. In **Egypt** we are working with the British Council to support the establishment of Victim Support Units, which will provide expert help to victims of sexual violence and harassment, drawing on UK experience. In **Syria**, Syrian human rights activists are being given the training and tools necessary to promote accountability, including the collection of forensic and other evidence of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, for future use in criminal proceedings.

In **Ukraine**, the CP works to deliver a peaceful path to territorial integrity and conflict resolution through a range of projects focusing on peacebuilding, strategic communication, and assistance to the Ukrainian government. In addition to this bilateral support, CP funds are used to contribute to the essential monitoring and stability work of international organisations currently operating in Ukraine. This includes the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission, which is the only organisation



A group of MPs from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association at a de-mining site in Jaffna

of its type operating in the conflict-affected areas of Eastern Ukraine.

In Africa, the CP funds work in **Sudan** to support the development of human rights monitoring mechanisms and capacity building for media practitioners in support of freedom of expression. At the African Union (AU) we support the capacity building of gender and child policies within peacekeeping operations. We do this by funding a child protection adviser in the Peace and Security Department. In support of PSVI we fund the programme coordinator of the AU's newly established gender peace and security programme – with the objective of mainstreaming gender best practice into all AU peace support operations. In **Mali**, the CP has continued to fund up to three civilians as part of the UK contribution to the EU Training Mission in Mali. They have provided practical training to the Malian military on human rights and international humanitarian law.

In the North Caucasus, CP project partners monitor grave human rights violations and have sought justice for victims in both domestic courts and the European Court of Human Rights. Project partners also work to build the capacity of grassroots human rights organisations, to promote women's rights, and to foster an atmosphere of tolerance and constructive dialogue amongst different parts of society in order to prevent conflict and youth radicalisation.

In wider Europe, the CP funds work in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** on the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict. A series of PSVI projects and activities were launched and supported by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, and other senior government officials, including, significantly, the judiciary and the military. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Peace Support Operations Training Centre has trained over 100 military personnel who may deploy on operations overseas in the prevention of sexual violence. An SOS helpline for survivors of sexual conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was also launched, allowing women and men immediate access to local expert help and assistance.

In South Asia, the CP in **Pakistan** works with local civil society partners to sensitise over 5,000 NGOs and community groups on democratic governance and human rights. Through this intervention, it has developed a cadre of strong NGOs that are now better equipped to deliver interventions in priority areas of human rights. We have also worked with project partners to promote the participation of minorities and women in parliamentary politics, and to deliver innovative ways of improving rule of law and service delivery for minorities and other disenfranchised communities in 10 districts of southern Punjab and Sindh.

The National Security Council (NSC) has introduced the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to replace the CP in April 2015. This will enable the UK government, for the first time, to look strategically at the alignment of its resources deployed overseas in countries at risk of instability.

Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

The concept of R2P was borne out of a failure of the international community to prevent mass atrocities in the 1990s in places such as **Rwanda** and Srebrenica. At the UN 2005 World Summit, all member states recognised that a country's first and foremost responsibility was to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. It also recognised that the international community had a responsibility to help implement the concept of R2P.

The UK directly supports this work through our funding of the UN Joint Office of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect; and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. This support helps the Joint Office in their work to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Our funding also helps the Joint Office to build the capacity of states to develop early warning mechanisms through training and technical assistance. The Global Centre conducts research designed to further understanding of R2P; supports increased engagement with emerging powers and regional organisations on its implementation; and devises strategies to help states build capacity on conflict prevention. The centre also helps to organise the annual meeting of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points. In 2014, this took place in Gaborone and was attended by the British High Commissioner to **Botswana**. Participants discussed issues such as the role of private companies in conflict prevention and the need for better accountability for mass atrocity crimes.

The UK actively participates in the annual interactive dialogue in the UN General Assembly and attends regular meetings with the Group of Friends of R2P. The UK ensured that the principles of R2P were incorporated in key UN resolutions such as the UK-led Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2171 on conflict prevention.

Women, Peace and Security

Women and men suffer in distinct ways during times of conflict. Women in particular suffer from heightened levels of specific forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. They also suffer from poverty, displacement, loss

of social networks, and limited or no access to health and medical care due to infrastructure breakdown. Women and girls continue to be excluded from the processes of preventing conflict, making peace and ensuring recovery, even though evidence shows that the effective participation of women helps to secure more sustainable peace. Despite the groundbreaking UNSCR 1325, which highlighted the vital importance of women's "equal participation and full involvement" in peace processes and elections, globally only one in five parliamentarians is female, and only one in 40 peace treaty signatories over the last 25 years has been a woman.

The UK continues to lead efforts to address this situation. 2014 was a pivotal year for UK policy on Women, Peace and Security. At the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June, the then Secretaries of State for the FCO and MOD, William Hague and Philip Hammond, respectively, and the Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, launched the UK's third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security. The NAP reaffirms and strengthens our ambition to put women and girls at the centre of all our efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, and to promote peace and stability.

The NAP focuses on six countries: **Afghanistan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Somalia and Syria**. In December we published our first Implementation Plan which we will use to assess the impact of our efforts on Women, Peace and Security throughout the life of this NAP, and to help us capture and report lessons to inform future activity. The Implementation Plan establishes baseline data and indicators to measure progress against outcomes at country level in the six focus countries. The NAP integrated, for the first time, the work on Women, Peace and Security with all the UK's broader work on women's rights, access to justice, and the prevention of violence. The plan therefore includes activities relating to the Prime Minister's Special Representative's Initiative on PSVI and DFID's Strategic Vision for Girls and Women.

The Implementation Plan illustrates the wide range of interventions being carried out across the six countries by the three departments. For example:

in **Afghanistan** the signing in early 2014 of the Strategy for the Management of the Affairs of Afghan National Police (ANP) Female Personnel was a significant step in improving the working conditions and retention of female ANP officers. Through the European Mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL), we are working with the Ministry of the Interior to ensure full implementation of this policy, though progress is slow;

- > in **Burma** we are supporting the Programme for Democratic Change, which aims to increase the percentage of parliamentarians who are women;
- > in **DRC** we are continuing to implement the UK's PSVI programme, including through working with key Congolese partners such as the Personal Representative of the Head of State for Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, relevant ministries, parliamentarians, and civil society actors;

- > in **Libya** we will promote and support, when circumstances permit, the integration of women into the Libyan security sector and in any forthcoming security sector reform;
- > in **Somalia** we are continuing to work with 300 communities to secure the abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation through the Joint Health and Nutrition Programme; and
- > in **Syria** we are providing women and children with access to mental health services, psychosocial support, safe spaces, and reproductive healthcare.

In the NAP, we pledged to ensure that women were fully and meaningfully represented at international peacebuilding events hosted by the UK, by encouraging government delegations to include women representatives fully. At the London Afghan Conference in December, 23 out of the 53 elected Afghan civil society delegates attending a session on Afghan civil society were women. Two of these delegates fed back outcomes from this event to a main plenary session on women and girls. The plenary session also included reflections from the 23 November Oslo Symposium on "Women's Rights and Empowerment in **Afghanistan**". The FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, attended the symposium and highlighted in the closing speech the priority we place on women, peace and security in Afghanistan.

The UK has continued to lead on the women, peace and security agenda at the UN Security Council (UNSC). Throughout 2014, we have consistently pressed for language on women, peace and security to be included in UN peacekeeping mandates, and for the UN to carry out its commitments to incorporate women's voices in their work, and to deploy the necessary gender expertise in peace support missions.

For the UNSC debate on women, peace and security in October, the UK drafted and saw the adoption of a Presidential Statement, which reiterated core principles on women's leadership and gender equality. The statement called on member states to enhance protection and services for displaced women and girls; called for sex- and age-aggregated data to inform policy and programming; and highlighted the tremendous impact of violent extremism on women – urging states to protect and engage with women in addressing this trend.

Looking ahead, 2015 will be another significant year for progress on women, peace and security, with the 15 year anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325. The UN will publish a global study on its implementation and hold a High Level Review in October. We will continue our close collaboration with UN Women to help shape these key events, and to ensure that together we help achieve real change for women affected by conflict.

Protection of Civilians (POC)

Civilians bear the brunt of modern day warfare. 90% of casualties in conflicts are civilians. 2014 repeated this pattern with conflicts in areas such as **Iraq** and the Occupied **Palestinian Territories** claiming thousands of civilian casualties. This is despite civilians being entitled to protection under international humanitarian law from threats of violence

and coercion. This protection also extends to those trying to help civilians, in particular humanitarian and relief bodies providing essentials such as food, clothing and medical supplies.

The UK is committed to helping prevent, manage and resolve conflicts around the world, and the POC is a core element of our approach. The UK's BSOS directs our approach and mainstreams POC into the UK's conflict and stabilisation policies. Part of that approach utilises the multiplier effect of multilateral organisations such as the UN, where the UK is the lead on POC, to deliver UK objectives.

To help mark fifteen years of UNSC engagement on the POC agenda, the UK drafted a Presidential Statement to reiterate the basic principles of POC. The statement was adopted in February at the biannual POC open debate. In the statement, the UNSC condemned violations of international humanitarian law, and reaffirmed the state's responsibility to protect its own civilians and the need to end impunity for violations and abuses of human rights.

We have also continued to chair the Informal Experts Group on Protection of Civilians, which receives briefing from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) about its current protection concerns ahead of peacekeeping and political missions mandate renewals. This further helps us to ensure that protection-related issues are adequately addressed in those mandates, including from a gender perspective. Of 17 peacekeeping missions, 10 have POC as a core part of their mandate. This highlights not only the importance of the issue, but also the growing need to protect civilians from deliberate attacks. The UK works closely with the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations, including through financial support to their POC Coordination Team, which produces guidance and technical support for missions, to improve the implementation of POC and address existing challenges.

In August, UK-led negotiations secured the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2175 on the protection of humanitarian workers. This was the first time since 2003, when the UN compound in Baghdad was attacked, that a resolution had been adopted on the issue, and was against the backdrop of increasing attacks on humanitarian aid workers. The resolution calls for an end to impunity for these acts, and for states to ensure better accountability for such attacks.

In 2015, the UK will continue to work both multilaterally and bilaterally to strengthen international action on protecting civilians. We will lobby to ensure that POC is a key component of the Secretary General's Review of Peace Operations.

Children and armed conflict

The protection and promotion of children's rights, including those of children in armed conflict, form an integral part of the FCO's wider international human rights agenda. Children are often the most vulnerable group to face the devastating consequences of conflict. If we fail to protect children it has an effect on a country's ability to emerge from conflict, undermining future generations and the potential of their leaders.

The UK has taken a prominent role in pressing for action to protect children in conflict. We have worked closely with the UN Special Representative (UNSR) for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), Leila Zerrougui, whose office we continued to fund in 2014. We have concentrated our efforts on helping to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict; and on protecting children from sexual violence in five priority countries: **Burma, Chad, the DRC, Somalia and South Sudan**. We have focused on accelerating the implementation of UN action plans on children and armed conflict, as well as encouraging work on preventative measures to tackle under-age recruitment, such as birth registration.

During the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June, the then FCO Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, hosted a ministerial roundtable on children and armed conflict, which Ms Zerrougui attended. This provided an opportunity to discuss the issue of child soldiers with ministers from the **DRC and Somalia**, while drawing on experiences from **Sierra Leone**, which has successfully ended child recruitment. Mr Simmonds also hosted a fringe event at the summit with NGOs, including War Child and Watchlist, as well as hearing courageous testimonials from child survivors in Sierra Leone and **Uganda**.

Following the summit, **DRC** President Kabila appointed Jeannine Mabunda as his Personal Representative for Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment – a key appointment, for which the UK and international partners had lobbied. Ms Mabunda will play an important role in implementing DRC's UN Action Plan.

We built on the discussions at the summit during the UNGA in New York in September, where FCO Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, co-hosted a roundtable with Ms Zerrougui. This was attended by Foreign Ministers and senior representatives from **Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen**, as well as AU Commissioner, Smail Chergui. The meeting brought together countries that have been successful in ending the recruitment of child soldiers with those that have yet to make progress, in order to share experiences and lessons learned.

During this roundtable, **Burma** announced the recent release of 109 children from their army, and **South Sudan** re-committed to the UN Action Plan it had signed in June. In addition, **Chad** shared its success in completing its UN Action Plan, which resulted in its removal from the list of countries of concern in the Secretary General's annual CAAC report.

The UK is an active member of the UNSC Working Group on CAAC, which leads the international response on protecting children in conflict. This includes pressing offending parties to commit to concrete action plans to verify and release child soldiers, as well as preventing other grave violations against children.

Under the **Luxembourg** Presidency of the UNSC in March, the UK worked closely with partners to secure the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2143. This outlines practical steps for combating violations against children, while also drawing attention to attacks on schools and their military use in armed conflict.

The UNSC Working Group agreed conclusions on the **DRC** in September, expressing concern about continued violations and abuses against children. It also agreed conclusions on **Syria** in November, condemning strongly the widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Syrian authorities, as well as the human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by armed groups.

Looking ahead, 6 March 2015 will mark the first anniversary of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General's Campaign "Children, Not Soldiers", which aims to end the recruitment and use of children by armed forces by the end of 2016. We expect that lack of humanitarian access, a rise in violations against children by extremist groups, and military use of schools will remain key concerns in the protection of children in armed conflict. We also look forward to working with the newly formed All Party Parliamentary Group on Protecting Children in Armed Conflict, which is conducting an inquiry into the government's approach to protecting children in conflict zones.

UK stabilisation capacity

The Stabilisation Unit (SU) helps the government to respond to crises and tackle the causes of instability overseas. This is integral to safeguarding and promoting the human rights of those living in conflict-affected states. SU is a uniquely integrated civil-military unit jointly owned by FCO, the MOD and DFID, designed to be agile and well-equipped to operate in high threat environments. It is funded by the CP and will be funded under the new CSSF in 2015. It combines in-house staff expertise with the ability to draw on a larger pool of civilian expertise for specialised, longer-term or larger-scale tasking. The unit ensures lessons from practical experience are captured as best practice and used to improve future SU, CP, and wider delivery in support of the BSOS. SU has an operational role across all three pillars of the strategy: early warning; rapid crisis prevention and response; and investing in upstream conflict prevention.

The SU's Business Plan for 2014-15 set out its objectives for the year. Priorities included integrated working across government on fragile and conflict-affected states; supporting the development of National Security Council (NSC) country strategies as well as bids and programming for the new CSSF (including lessons learnt from the CP); and implementing some of the UK's obligations in the UK NAP on Women, Peace and Security. The unit has also continued to act as a hub for the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability, which brings departments together to enable joined-up work across government in addressing conflict, and helps promote a shared understanding of contexts where the government is engaged, including on human rights issues. For example, the unit contributed to the development of a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability in **Pakistan**.

The SU actively responded to crises that erupted during the year, for example by addressing the potentially destabilising effects of the Ebola outbreak in **Sierra Leone** through deploying civilians to help the government's emergency response centres at national and district levels. It also provided equipment vehicles to the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force and

tents used to build UK treatment centres. In addition, the SU has provided support to the crisis response in **Ukraine**. It deployed 26 people to the OSCE in Europe Special Monitoring Mission; provided non-lethal equipment to the Ukrainian government; coordinated formulation of the UK government's and the NSC's strategy, and funded options for Ukraine within the CSSF.

In 2014, the SU recruited, prepared, deployed and sustained – safely – experts to meet a total of 455 ongoing and new deployments in 40 countries, including **Iraq, Kosovo, Somalia, Ukraine** and the **Syrian** border. It provided support to more than 30 military exercises and study days worldwide. It drew on SU core staff and the pool of deployable civilian experts to share best practice with UK and international partners, and to develop the UK's integrated response to managing conflict. Those deployed by the SU work on a wide range of activities, including supporting multilateral missions, for example in Kosovo (EU) and Somalia (UN); missions within the FCO-led PSVI; and parent department programmes in fragile and conflict-affected states.

The SU continues to support the PSVI, and was involved in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June. The PSVI team of experts are now integrated into the unit's pool of experts and maintained by a function manager recruited in June, to ensure that the team continues to meet demand. The SU also offers cross-governmental training courses on women,

peace and security, conflict and stabilisation, and security and justice.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding refers to activities designed to consolidate peaceful relations and strengthen political, socio-economic and security institutions capable of handling conflict, in order to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. It is about addressing the underlying causes of conflict; supporting a state's ability to manage disputes; and assisting them to carry out core state functions such as protection of civilians. Peacebuilding helps countries prevent or overcome the effects of conflict and to build longer-term resilience and prosperity. This is critical to the UK's national security objectives, and integral to promotion of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights.

The UN plays a key role in addressing post-conflict peacebuilding challenges. The UK pursues several of its peacebuilding goals through the UN. Much of our work has focused on strengthening and improving the peacebuilding tools at the UN's disposal, so these deliver in as effective, accountable and coordinated a manner as possible. We do this through our support for UN Special Political Missions (SPM), which are the UN's primary tool for delivering peacebuilding activities in conflict-affected states and through the UN Peacebuilding Fund. An increasingly important area for us is supporting civilian UN policing, which is vital to the long-term success of helping countries transition out of conflict.

Case Study: Ebola – Human Rights in West Africa

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa has posed unprecedented challenges to governments, civil society, and the international community. Over 20,000 cases of the disease were reported in 2014 across **Sierra Leone, Guinea** and **Liberia**, with the threat of an outbreak in a number of other countries. Britain is playing a leading role in Sierra Leone to fight the disease, and has committed over £230 million in responding to Ebola. This is in addition to the UK's significant support to international agencies.

In response to the crisis, governments in **Sierra Leone, Guinea** and **Liberia** introduced restrictions to stem the spread of infection. In Sierra Leone emergency measures included: a nationwide ban on public gatherings not related to Ebola sensitisation; restrictions on movement of people and vehicles; quarantine controls; protection of health workers by the police and the military; and surveillance and house-to-house searches to trace and quarantine Ebola victims and suspects. Whilst these measures were proportionate to combat the crisis, and demonstrated a commitment to the rule of law, quarantine has in some cases impacted livelihoods and access to health care. There have also been isolated reports of extortion and excessive use of force by security forces during the enforcement of quarantines. The security forces largely acted in an even-handed and restrained way in implementing the emergency measures. As part of its support to the security forces since the civil war, the UK has provided human rights training.

The arrest of **Sierra Leonean** journalist, David Tam Baryoh, under the emergency measures for incitement, led to international concern. Amnesty International claimed he was a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for exercising his right to freedom of

expression. Mr Baryoh was released on bail on 14 November after 11 days detained without charge in a maximum security prison.

In **Liberia**, overzealous implementation of controls, such as quarantining, occasionally led to reports of violations, most notably the death of a child shot by security forces. There were also reports of intimidation of journalists, including government threats to close a newspaper.

The Ebola response in each country has demanded an unparalleled public health response, leaving little capacity to address other potentially deadly diseases and conditions; such as malaria, typhoid, dysentery, and childbirth complications.

During her visit to **Sierra Leone** on 16 December, Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, announced a £2.5 million grant for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support children who have lost family, or whose parents are being treated for Ebola.

The widespread view is that the senatorial elections in **Liberia** in December were free and fair. Public engagement and turnout was low, partly due to fears about Ebola, but more likely represented apathy and disillusionment with the political process. **Guinea** is due presidential elections in 2015.

Supporting the fight against Ebola has been the UK's top priority in each of the three countries. Nonetheless, the UK government has been able to continue to support a number of important programmes to promote human rights priorities, including the prevention of sexual violence.

At the heart of all of these activities is a focus on human rights. SPM mandates and UN policing activities are increasingly geared towards the protection of civilians and their human rights. SPMs focus on political peacebuilding activity rather than military peacekeeping tasks. Many SPMs, including UNAMA in **Afghanistan** and UNSOM in **Somalia**, have mandates to monitor and protect human rights. The UK supports this work through funding to the UN Department of Political Affairs, and through our position as a permanent member on the UNSC, which involves setting and reviewing mission mandates. The UK has continued to adopt a strategic approach to SPMs, including by taking a concerted look at their mandates, leadership and resourcing. One of our overarching aims is to institutionalise a gender-based approach to peacebuilding at the UN.

In March, the UNIPSIL mission in **Sierra Leone** closed, marking the culmination of fifteen years of UN peace operations in the country, and the end of a successful UN effort in post-conflict peacebuilding. The UK played a key role in ensuring sustained and constant political attention via the UNSC, as well as engaged and focused international support. This ultimately helped enable the UN mission to withdraw.

There have been some new conflicts or relapses into conflict in 2014, where the UK has worked through the UN to help stabilise the situation. For example, we deployed a team of UK police officers to **South Sudan**, where they are helping the UN to deliver community policing and protection of civilians to vulnerable populations, many of whom remain in internally displaced persons camps.

We have been the largest supporter of the UN's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), committing £55 million over four years from 2011. The purpose of the fund is to strengthen international support for post-conflict states, filling the gaps where other funding mechanisms cannot help. In **Burundi**, the PBF funded the demobilisation of combatants to transform the National Forces of Liberation into a political party and provided crucial support to elections. In **Cote d'Ivoire** the PBF helped the reconstruction of 34 public administrative buildings destroyed in the conflict. In 2014, we continued to fund the UN's network of Peace and Development Advisers, who work in countries such as **Nigeria** and the **DRC** to advise the UN and national governments on how they can build peace through development programmes.

There are many peacebuilding challenges ahead in 2015. How the UN supports **Afghanistan** following the draw-down of military troops will be hugely important to Afghanistan's post-conflict transition. We will be working through the UNSC to support the UN mission (UNAMA) to deliver its mandate. 2015 will be a busy election year for Africa, which will see 18 elections across the continent. We will need to be alert to the distinct challenges each will face: the **Central African Republic** is still in the throes of bitter internal conflict; **Burundi** saw a long-standing UN peacebuilding mission withdraw in 2014; and **Cote d'Ivoire** is responding to the threat of Ebola.

CHAPTER VIII: Human Rights in Promoting Britain's Prosperity

We believe that the promotion of business and respect for human rights should go hand in hand. We live in a world where companies are increasingly transnational, and where legal standards and working conditions differ from country to country. Human rights violations and abuses and business risks often share the same root cause, in governance failings. UK business and government have a shared interest in working together to tackle these failings, and uphold British values.

Incorporating human rights into business operations across the world matters. It matters to companies, protecting and enhancing reputations, as well as reassuring stakeholders, attracting investors, and increasing the value of brands. It matters to the reputation of the UK and the prosperity of its people. And it matters to the health, safety and livelihoods of employees and the communities to which they belong.

We believe that respect for human rights lays a strong foundation for the long-term success and sustainability of British business. We will continue to work with business, civil society and other governments to this end.

Promoting Responsible Business Practice and the UK Action Plan on Business and Human Rights

The government is committed to promoting the widespread implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). In the UK this is carried out through our National Action Plan, launched jointly by Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) ministers, and administered by cross-government working groups. We have continued to encourage other countries to follow our lead in publishing an action plan, and during 2014 we were able to share our experience with other governments, including EU partners.



Picture: Soheil Zafar/NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights
Apparel Factory visit in Dhaka, 6 December 2014. Multi-purpose building factory producing for non-Accord/Alliance European brand.

In 2014, our focus was on the implementation of the specific commitments set out in our action plan, which is based around the three pillars of the UNGPs.

At the government level we:

- > incorporated provisions relating to supply chain transparency into the draft Modern Slavery Bill and the accompanying Modern Slavery strategy, which was launched on 29 November. This legislation, the first of its kind, creates the Office of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and sets out measures to tackle slavery in the UK and overseas;
- > provided financial support under the FCO Human Rights and Democracy Programme Fund for projects in countries including **Angola, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, and Malaysia**, as well as for the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre's online hub – a tool for

Case Study: The Cambodian Garment Industry

A delegation of UK and global garment brands, coordinated by the Ethical Trading Initiative and supported by the British Embassy, lobbied the Cambodian government for better conditions for workers, including the right to negotiate wages collectively and for workers to be able to associate freely. The resulting engagement by the Cambodian government, employer associations and labour representatives resulted in a consensus agreement on a much

improved minimum wage and a mechanism for reviewing it in the future.

This action reinforces the importance business places on a strong and clear regulatory framework in which to operate, as well as the importance of an empowered workforce. It is clear evidence of what can be achieved if governments and business work together to implement the UNGPs.

providing guidance, information and best practice on business and human rights available in six languages;

- > increased and extended support to the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business in **Burma**; and
- > continued to provide support, through the International Labour Organisation (ILO), to improve the safety standards and working conditions in the ready-made garment sector in **Bangladesh**.

We continued to provide support to business to enable them to meet their responsibility to respect human rights throughout their operations. In particular we:

- > launched guidance for the cyber security sector advising on human rights risks involved in the export of their products and services. This was in conjunction with the industry body, techUK, and civil society (Institute for Human Rights and Business – IHRB);
- > re-launched the Overseas Business Risk service, providing guidance to businesses entering or working in markets across the world;
- > issued guidance to UK Trade and Investment officers across the network on providing human rights advice to UK companies;

- > supported a global programme of research by the Economist Intelligence Unit on business awareness, commitment and progress on human rights, for launch in February 2015;
- > supported the December launch of the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark. This will be the world's first free assessment and ranking system for the human rights performance of hundreds of companies in four key sectors – extractives, apparel, ICT, and agriculture; and
- > extended the UK's support to the UN Global Compact for a further five years.

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are voluntary principles and standards of responsible conduct for multinational businesses. They include a chapter (added in 2011 and based on the UNGPs) on the responsibility of businesses to respect human rights.

Each country adhering to the guidelines provides a National Contact Point (NCP), to promote the guidelines and to consider complaints against businesses. The UK NCP is provided by BIS, with support from the Department for International Development (DFID).

Case Study: Cyber Export Guidance

The expansion of “cyber space” has brought huge economic and social benefits; it underpins almost every aspect of modern life and has revolutionised the way we work. However, the very same benefits we enjoy from ease of communication and access to information online also pose risks and provide hackers, terrorists, and other criminals with new opportunities. To help mitigate these risks, companies have developed security products and services which defend networks from malicious activity. Some of these capabilities enable users to monitor systems, analyse behaviour, or block harmful content. In many countries, such as the UK, these products are used legitimately, including by law enforcement authorities, in accordance with the domestic and international law obligations. However, in countries which do not have a similar approach to human rights, or adhere to their international human rights obligations, the same products are at risk of being used in ways that could breach states' legal obligations, e.g. as tools contributing to internal repression or to restrict freedom of expression of individuals, including journalists, activists and marginalised groups, unlawfully or arbitrarily. Such activity may also risk either directly or indirectly contributing to other human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, torture and death.

Normally exports which could cause harm, such as arms, are covered by the export licensing system. However, many cyber capabilities, products and services are not listed. This problem was recognised by the Cyber Growth Partnership, a joint body representing industry, academia and government. In September 2013, the government undertook to develop practical guidance for companies in managing these risks.

The FCO worked with techUK, a technology trade association, and the IHRB to produce this guidance. IHRB facilitated consultation

with industry and played a central role drafting and reviewing the human rights chapter. The resulting 35-page document, entitled “Assessing Cyber Security Export Risks: Human Rights and National Security” was published on 26 November 2014. It sets out:

- > the different sorts of potential harm associated with particular cyber capabilities;
- > a process to help companies assess country-specific risks and to evaluate business partners and re-sellers; and
- > potential mitigation options for avoiding or reducing risks.

techUK will evaluate the document after six months and assess whether it has helped companies to build confidence. In the meantime, the FCO will ensure that the Overseas Business Risk service provides the requisite level of support to companies. It will also explore additional options to raise risk awareness and promote good practice.

At the international level, the government continues to support the work of the UN Working Group and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we have actively participated in their projects to develop guidance for the development of national action plans, and for addressing the issue of remedy in the case of gross human rights abuses. The UK participated in the Asia Europe Meeting Seminar on Human Rights, which focused on business and human rights, in **Vietnam** in November; the Second World Forum on Human Rights, in Marrakesh in December, for a panel discussion on business and human rights, and a delegation led by Minister for Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs, Jo Swinson, attended the 3rd Annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva.

The process generally takes about a year from receipt of a complaint. Complaints accepted in an initial assessment stage either proceed to mediation between the parties or to further examination by the UK NCP. Initial assessments on all complaints and final statements on those mediated or examined are published by the UK NCP on the www.gov.uk website. Issues raised with the UK NCP include the direct impacts of business operations (for example the impacts on local workers and communities) and impacts of business partnerships (including with state agency partners).

The UK NCP received complaints against six businesses in 2014, and published assessments of complaints against a total of 14 businesses (including complaints received in 2013). The UK NCP also made two new final statements during 2014, reporting a mediated outcome in one case, and findings and recommendations in another. Complaints against seven businesses were ongoing at the end of 2014.

The NCP's work to promote the guidelines in 2014 included a range of meetings, workshops and presentations to over 70 businesses and NGOs in the UK and overseas. The UK NCP also participated in training to build capacity of sister NCPs in other countries. In 2015, the NCP will continue its work to promote the guidelines, and will continue to address both ongoing and new complaints.

Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) provide guidance on responsible business practices to oil, gas and mining companies, which often operate in high-risk and conflict-affected areas. This guidance helps companies to engage with public security forces and Private Security

Companies (PSCs), and to conduct effective risk assessments so that their security operations do not lead to human rights abuses or exacerbate conflict. They also help to encourage investment by reducing the operational, legal and reputational risks that companies face in connection with security, where their work affects the daily lives of local people. The Voluntary Principles Initiative is a forum for companies, governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to work together to find solutions to complex security and human rights challenges.

The UK assumed the Chairmanship of the VPs in March 2014 for one year. Our priorities were to encourage more governments and UK companies to join the initiative, to help companies to use the VPs to manage risks more effectively, and to make progress towards bringing the initiative further into line with the UNGPs, through increased accountability and transparency. We have made progress in all of these areas.

In May, **Ghana** became the first African country to join the Voluntary Principles Initiative and, following a workshop in **Angola**, which the UK supported, the Angolan government made a commitment to accede to the VPs. We also funded workshops on the VPs in **Mozambique** and **Kenya**, which brought together representatives of governments, extractive companies and civil society. These workshops have provided the foundations for further dialogue on the VPs in these countries. We have also promoted the VPs in **Argentina**, **EU**, **Indonesia**, **Kazakhstan**, **Kenya**, **Mozambique**, **Peru**, **Philippines**, **South Africa**, **Tanzania**, and **Thailand**. We have done this through bilateral lobbying by FCO ministers and overseas missions, workshops, articles, blogs, and participation in mining conferences and other events. One UK oil company, which participated in a meeting in 2013 at the FCO on the VPs, joined the initiative this year.

Case Study: the World Cup and Human Rights in Brazil

The 2014 Football World Cup put Brazil under the spotlight, including the human rights concerns attached to an event on this scale.

A number of specific concerns came to the fore: during construction of the venues nine workers died, highlighting concern about safety standards, and the National Coalition of Local Committees for a People's World Cup and Olympics claimed that 170,000 people had been forcefully evicted from their homes before the games, despite Brazil's establishment of a Working Group on the Human Right to Adequate Housing.

However, there were also some positive lessons, and the UK was able to work with Brazil to address some of the biggest issues. One focus was around children – ahead of the games, the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) was able to work with authorities in Brazil to strengthen policies against child sexual exploitation, and monitor and block the entry of convicted paedophiles to the country. The NCA also backed the 'It's a penalty!' initiative led by the NGO Happy Child.

The World Cup brought into focus concerns in the field of disability rights. This was a central part of the UK's engagement with Brazil during the tournament. The UK's Minister for Sport, Tourism and

Equalities, Helen Grant, experienced first-hand an audio-descriptive commentary service developed to make football more accessible to the blind. The project was developed by two NGOs: the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE) and the local Urece organisation for partially sighted and blind people.

The British Embassy in Brasilia supported civil society in raising awareness around human rights concerns and mega sporting events (MSEs). Through the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Programme, we funded an initiative with IHRB looking at the human rights impacts, and lessons learned, from MSEs. As a result of this project, the web portal www.megasportingevents.org was launched, with the aim of acting as a forum for MSE hosts to share best practice and improve protection and respect of human rights at every stage of planning and delivery of such events.

Drawing on lessons from the London 2012 Olympics – and the 2014 World Cup – we will continue our "Olympic Dialogue" with Brazil in the run-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio in 2016. This should continue to provide lessons and expertise for future MSE hosts.

Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The Guiding Principles are based on three pillars:



Pillar 1: Protect

The State duty to protect human rights



Pillar 2: Respect

The corporate responsibility to respect human rights



Pillar 3: Remedy

Access to remedy

How we're supporting the pillars:



Benchmarking

Corporate Human Rights Benchmark



Supply chain Transparency

Modern Slavery Bill

EU non-financial reporting Directive



Business & Human Rights Projects

In **Colombia, India, Brazil, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Malaysia**



Multi-stakeholder action

Cambodia: increase in minimum wage; trades unionists freed



Sector approach

TechUK Guide

UK Chair of VPs

ICoC for private security companies



Peer-to-peer Networking

Global Compact UK –Members increased by 14%

Ethical Trading Initiative



Government Implementation

Cross Government Working Groups and overseas networks



Information and guidance

FCO/UKTI Overseas Business Risks Service

Advice from UKTI in overseas markets

We also took steps to strengthen the initiative by working with other participants to develop verification frameworks. These frameworks will help measure participants' implementation of the VPs and of their roles and responsibilities within the initiative. All participants have committed to greater discussion of their efforts. We started a process to identify case studies relating to the VPs, which we can use to demonstrate to other stakeholders, including governments, how the principles are having an impact on the ground.

Before our chairmanship concludes in March 2015, we will host two events at the Mining Indaba (annual professional conference dedicated to the capitalisation and development of mining interests in Africa) in **South Africa** in February, to encourage African governments to join the initiative, and showcase our achievements over the past year. In March, we will host the annual plenary meeting of the VPs in London. We will use our plenary to promote the benefits of membership to

invited governments, and provide a space to discuss and review participants' implementation of the VPs for the first time. Following our plenary, we will hand over the chairmanship to the US. We will continue to work with the US and other participants to expand government membership, support more effective use of the principles, and encourage implementation of the new verification frameworks and the development of a more robust reporting process.

Private Security Companies (PSCs)

Legitimate PSCs that work to high standards play a vital role in the protection of diplomatic missions, businesses and NGOs working in complex and dangerous environments around the world. We are pursuing a policy to raise the standards of all PSCs working in complex environments overseas, and to recognise those that work to high standards. The UK is a signatory to the Montreux Document on private military

and security companies, which defines how international law applies to the activities of private military and security companies when they are operating in an armed conflict zone. We implement the Montreux Document through our support for implementation of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers (ICoC) and for the professional standards which flow from it.

In 2014, the government maintained the strong progress we had made in raising the standards of PSCs working in complex environments overseas, and ensuring independent oversight of these standards and recognition for those companies working to these standards. We continued to work closely with our industry partner, the Security in Complex Environments Group, and with civil society.

In March, the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) completed its pilot to accredit independent certifying bodies to certify PSCs to public, professional standards. These standards are ANSI/ASIS PSC.1, a standard for land-based PSCs, and ISO 28000, incorporating the requirements of the guidance ISO PAS 28007, for maritime PSCs providing armed guards on ships. The UKAS pilot, part-funded by the FCO, is the first of its kind in the world. Following the pilot, UKAS is developing guidance for accredited certification bodies, which is in part intended to ensure they maintain an up-to-date understanding of the areas of human rights and international humanitarian law applicable to the work of PSCs in complex environments. To this end, we are facilitating contributions to the draft from academic and civil society experts.

The British government is contributing to the international process to consider revisions of the PSC.1 and ISO PAS 28007 standards, to ensure that the revised standards are at least as vigorous as the current versions on human rights, and that they continue to be usable by PSCs. This process started in 2014 and will continue in 2015.

At the international level, our support for the ICoC Association, which will oversee compliance with the code, remained strong. Through the UK's seat on the Board of the Association, we helped to develop the processes by which the Association will admit, certify and monitor its members. We made the case to clients of PSCs, including companies, governments and NGOs, that Association membership should be recognised in contracting policies in order to provide commercial recognition for PSCs working to the highest standards.

In the coming year, we will continue our relationship with UKAS to ensure it has access to industry and civil society expertise, and continue to ensure that revisions to the PSC.1 and ISO PAS 28007 standards respect human rights. We will work closely with government, industry and civil society partners in the ICoC Association so that it delivers the needs of each. We will promote our approach to PSCs through participation in the newly-established Montreux Document forum.

Responsible sourcing of minerals

Supply chains of minerals from high-risk areas continue to pose a threat to human rights. They can provide a source of funding for armed groups and, where funds are diverted for other

illegitimate purposes, they can harm local communities who should expect to benefit from a valuable economic resource. We address this issue both through the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, and by encouraging better corporate due diligence.

The Kimberley Process was established in 2002 to regulate the global trade in rough diamonds, and so prevent rebel groups using their trade to fund armed conflict. The scheme now has 54 participants representing 81 countries, and accounts for over 99% of the global production and trade of rough diamonds. The UK is represented in the Kimberley Process by the EU.

The Government Diamond Office (GDO), based in the FCO, and the UK Border Force are responsible for preventing illicit diamonds entering or leaving the UK. In 2014, authorities seized one shipment of rough diamonds which was not compliant with the Kimberley Process minimum requirements. The GDO continued its work with the UK's rough diamond industry to provide expert advice, and audited thirteen rough diamond traders as part of its oversight of industry compliance with Kimberley Process minimum standards. It also inspected twelve shipments of rough diamonds entering or leaving the UK, and issued Kimberley Process certificates for rough diamond exports worth over US\$63 million.

In 2014, we supported stronger implementation of the Kimberley Process minimum requirements worldwide. **Côte d'Ivoire** was shown to have satisfied the provisions of the Kimberley Process as far as possible under the UN Security Council's embargo on rough diamond exports, which was lifted on 29 April 2014 after nine years. We will continue to provide political support to re-integrate the **Central African Republic** into the Kimberley Process, following its suspension in 2013. Both situations demonstrate that the Kimberley Process remains a credible and effective conflict prevention tool.

We will continue to support the Kimberley Process efforts to deliver good governance through the Regional Approach to the Mano River Union countries of **Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone** and **Côte d'Ivoire**. Supported by the EU, this initiative will help these states improve their internal controls, and to raise standards of Kimberley Process compliance collectively.

Amending the Kimberley Process mandate better to address the risks around today's diamond supply chains, which include human rights abuses and violence by states and other armed groups, remains contentious. We will continue to make the case for reform in 2015 under the **Angolan** chairmanship of the Kimberley Process. Angola has identified the VPs as a way of tackling human rights abuses around diamond mines. As current Chair of the Voluntary Principles Initiative, we will work with Angola on promoting the use of the VPs among Kimberley Process participants.

We believe effective due diligence by companies buying minerals which may originate from affected areas will complement the diamond-specific work of governments in the Kimberley Process. OECD's "due diligence guidance for responsible supply chains of minerals from conflict-affected and high-risk areas" includes specific guidance on gold and

tin, tungsten and tantalum, all of which are used in consumer electronics. Some companies and trade bodies have already put in place programmes to implement the guidance, and we continue to support and encourage relevant UK importers to carry out full and transparent due diligence.

The EU has also given its political backing to the guidance, by releasing in March a draft regulation to set up a self-certification system for companies that are implementing the guidance, alongside a joint communication setting out other areas of support for companies to implement the guidance. We support the intention of the draft regulation, and the measures set out in the joint communication, particularly support to small- and medium-sized enterprises to implement the guidance. We will continue to work on the draft scheme in 2015, our aims being to ensure support for and consistency with the OECD guidance, and to deliver a scheme which is accessible to importers, and which supports trade with conflict-affected and high-risk areas. Our position will continue to be informed by regular contact with industry and civil society.

Anti-corruption and transparency

Corruption harms societies, undermines the rule of law and economic development and threatens democracy. It corrodes the fabric of society, creates barriers to doing business, and deters private sector investment. Corruption also threatens our national security, economic prosperity and international reputation. The World Bank estimates that bribery can add up to 10% to business costs globally, and that over US\$1 trillion is paid in bribes each year.

The UK works to improve standards of anti-corruption legislation and enforcement among our trading partners internationally through the OECD, the UN, and the Council of Europe conventions against corruption. Our Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates throughout the world have continued to be active in supporting the implementation of the UK Bribery Act 2010. They carried out campaigns to highlight the issue on International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December, often in cooperation with civil society and other governments. DFID's development assistance programmes also contribute to strengthening anti-corruption systems in partner countries, both through direct assistance to anti-corruption institutions and oversight bodies, as well as to improving public financial management and delivery of public services.

On 18 December, the UK published its first Anti-Corruption Action Plan. We developed this as part of our second Open Government Partnership National Action Plan; it sets the strategic direction and targets for all anti-corruption activity – both at home and overseas. It sets out how the government is doing more to increase transparency, tackle money-laundering and ensure the UK is at the forefront of efforts to raise global standards; promote sustainable growth; increase transparency; identify illicit financial flows; and return stolen assets. It will ensure greater collaboration and consistency around UK efforts to tackle corruption.

The UK played an active part in G20 activity. At the G20 Summit in Brisbane in November, leaders agreed an ambitious two-year [anti-corruption action plan](#), which sets out work

in six priority areas: beneficial ownership; bribery; high-risk sectors; public sector transparency and integrity; international cooperation; and private sector transparency and integrity. The action plan includes the development of best practices and the possible development of high-level principles, to tackle corruption in the extractives sector, alongside other high-risk sectors such as customs, fisheries and primary forestry, and construction. The G20 has also committed to account for its anti-corruption commitments by reporting annually to G20 leaders on progress made, and publishing these reports.

In 2014, the FCO broadened its work with others across Whitehall to improve international architecture for asset recovery. We supported the delivery of the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery in November, deploying the network to lobby on the forum objectives, securing high-level attendance, and facilitating discussions in its margins. This built on our delivery of the **Ukraine** Forum on Asset Recovery in April 2014, attended by over 200 delegates from 30 countries, including four UK Ministers, which facilitated international cooperation and identified concrete actions to advance asset recovery work.

The FCO's Prosperity Fund and Arab Partnership Participation Fund have continued to run nearly 40 projects that focus on anti-corruption and transparency. Some involve capacity building or providing technical assistance to promote domestic reform or to help meet international commitments. Projects often involve working directly with private sector partners. In **Mexico** we shared UK technical expertise on making public works planning and execution, and the public's interaction with bureaucracy, more transparent. In **Angola**, we supported the establishment of an institute for ethical business practices and good governance standards. And in **South Africa** we ran a project to identify gaps in the current legal framework for whistleblowers.

The FCO's [Overseas Business Risk \(OBR\)](#) online web service is aimed at helping UK businesses identify and mitigate overseas business risks. Covering 80 overseas markets, the intelligence shared by our network of British Embassies and High Commissions includes information on levels of bribery and corruption; political and economic stability; threats from terrorism and organised crime; human rights risks; protective and cyber-security advice; and the protection of intellectual property.

In 2015, our activity to tackle corruption will be underpinned by the new Anti-Corruption Action Plan to raise global standards further and promote sustainable growth. This will include working with the Ministry of Justice to facilitate workshops with our international partners focused on sharing the UK's experience of drafting and developing the UK Bribery Act; working with Cabinet Office to coordinate the UK's international engagement on corruption; and using the FCO overseas network, as well as our membership of international organisations, such as the G7 and the G20, to promote further action to tackle corruption.

Arms export licensing

Britain has one of the most robust arms export-licensing systems in the world. All licence applications are assessed on

a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant factors. A licence will not be issued if to do so would be inconsistent with any of the Consolidated Criteria (the consolidation of the UK's national criteria and the 1998 EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports).

This system of export licensing promotes the UK's prosperity by supporting responsible exports that meet the legitimate defence and security needs of other states, while preventing exports which might fuel regional or internal conflicts, threaten UK national security, or have human rights implications (see Chapter VII – Countering Proliferation of Conventional Weapons).

EU Trade and Human Rights

Promoting global trade can contribute towards better human rights. Free trade can boost incomes and, in turn, create more open and transparent societies, and enhance the rule of law. By supporting ambitious trade agreements, countries can become more integrated into the global economy, and are more likely to be held accountable to their international commitments.

Bilateral trade

The EU has a policy of inserting an “essential element” clause into political framework agreements. These agreements generally accompany and are linked to trade agreements that the EU negotiates with third countries. Essential element clauses state that respect for human rights and democratic principles is a central pillar of the framework agreement. This makes compliance with the essential elements clause of the framework agreement a requirement of the trade agreement as well. If there are serious violations of human rights, the situation can be examined and appropriate measures taken by the EU.

The EU-**Singapore** Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations concluded in October 2014. The FTA highlights the commitments of both parties to upholding human rights, and references their Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 2013, which contains an “essential elements” clause.

The EU-United States Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is currently under negotiation. As stated in the European Council's negotiating directives to the European Commission for the negotiations, we expect the TTIP text to confirm that this partnership is based on common principles and values shared by the EU and the United States, including the protection and promotion of human rights. For example, we expect the Trade and Sustainable Development chapter of TTIP to promote dialogue and cooperation between the EU and United States on upholding labour rights, both domestically and in an international context.

In April 2014, the EU and **Cuba** opened negotiations for a bilateral Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA). The final EU-Cuba PDCA is likely to cover the full scope of relations between the EU and Cuba, including trade relations. One of the main purposes of this agreement (and PDCA's in general) is to develop a dialogue based on the respect for and promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance. We hope the EU-Cuba PDCA negotiations will resume in 2015.

The EU-Central America PDCA, between the EU and its member states, and **Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua** and **Panama**, entered into force on 1 May.

Multilateral trade

In November, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) reached an agreement to implement the Bali package, which was negotiated at the WTO Ministerial Conference in 2013. The agreement includes a number of trade measures for Least Developed Countries, which will help them better integrate into the global trading system and support jobs and economic growth.

Trade and development

The EU this year concluded negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with three regions in Africa (East, West, and Southern). The EPAs are based on the fundamental principles and the essential and fundamental

Case Study: The Ukraine Forum on Asset Recovery (UFAR)

The governments of the UK and United States, in support of the efforts of the government of Ukraine, and to maximise international cooperation, convened the Ukraine Forum on Asset Recovery (UFAR), in London on 29-30 April, 2014. The forum brought together a range of international partners from over thirty countries and territories around the world, as well several international organisations – including the invaluable support of the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR) of the World Bank and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

The objective of UFAR was to facilitate international cooperation for the early freezing, tracing and ultimate recovery of stolen assets, in support of the government of Ukraine. Senior government officials alongside policy makers, judicial experts, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, financial intelligence analysts, and regulators participated in UFAR. Bilateral meetings between Ukrainian officials

and other delegations were an important feature of UFAR in helping to identify concrete actions necessary to advance asset recovery efforts. The forum was conducted in a spirit of openness, collaboration, mutual respect, and urgent resolve.

Participants agreed that successful asset recovery cases are complex and take time, no matter how high the political will among nations. However, discussion over the two days recognised that progress already had been made as a result of the forum's work, both in its preparation and during the meetings. Technical assistance is ongoing and continues to be available to assist Ukraine in efforts to recover the proceeds of corruption, and this critical work continues as a sign of the enduring partnership between participating countries and those who continue to support the political transition in Ukraine.

elements that are set out in the Cotonou Agreement, which includes obligations stemming from respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

The EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) supports jobs and economic development through the reduction of tariffs on exports to the EU. These preferences can be temporarily removed from countries if they show a "serious and systematic violation" of the principles contained in 15 international conventions on human and labour rights. Under GSP+, the EU gives additional trade preferences to countries that give a binding undertaking to implement effectively and maintain ratification of 27 international conventions.

On 25 December, **Philippines** became a GSP+ beneficiary. Existing GSP+ beneficiaries are **Armenia, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Mongolia, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay** and **Peru**. These countries are committed to reporting on their implementation of the international conventions, which will contribute to the production of a progress report from the European Commission at the end of 2015.

Sanctions

Sanctions, such as asset freezes and travel bans, are one of the tools used by the international community to promote human rights and democracy, in particular in conflict and post-conflict situations. Targeted measures against human rights abusers can be effective in either coercing a change in the target's behaviour, or constraining their ability to continue that behaviour. The UK is active on the UN Security Council (UNSC) and within the EU to promote its policy of smart sanctions that are legally robust and effective in delivering our human rights goals.

The UNSC and EU have established a number of sanctions regimes that include measures targeting human rights abuses, in countries such as **Belarus**, the **Central African Republic**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, **Guinea**, **Iran**, **Libya**, **Sudan**, **Syria**, and **Zimbabwe**. In 2014, the UK took action to ensure that these measures were reviewed so that they remain effective in supporting wider human rights work in these countries. We also supported the imposition of new EU sanctions regimes concerning the situations in **South Sudan** and **Ukraine**, both of which contained specific criteria targeting persons responsible for serious violations of human rights in those countries. One individual has so far been listed for human rights violations under the new South Sudan measures, resulting from his role in an attack on Bentiu (a town in the north of the country) in April which resulted in the deaths of 200 civilians. A new UN regime was also established in February 2014, which included measures targeting individuals responsible for human rights abuses in **Yemen**.

Sanctions are also used to counter terrorist groups that commit human rights abuses such as Al Qaeda and ISIL. In 2014, the UNSC responded to the growing terrorist threat by adopting a series of resolutions, including new measures to choke off financial support for ISIL.

CHAPTER IX: Human Rights for British Nationals Overseas

Supporting the human rights of British nationals overseas is a priority for the UK government. Consular Directorate, who lead this work, developed a [Consular Strategy \(2013-16\)](#) which focuses our support on the needs of the most vulnerable, alongside trying to ensure that, in all cases, international norms are protected, and British nationals do not face discrimination. UK government officials support British nationals across a range of cases, but those with the greatest human rights risks happen when British nationals are charged with a criminal offence, detained, face the death penalty, or when they are the victim in a forced marriage or child abduction case. Our work in all these areas would not be possible without strong partnerships with human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) in the UK and overseas; they provide invaluable support, expertise and advice to supplement what we are able to do.

In 2014, the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) conducted a review of Consular Services. The committee commended our work in many areas, including our focus on the most vulnerable British nationals needing our assistance and the high-quality support we provide in areas such as kidnapping and forced marriage. We recognise many of the areas the FAC has identified as areas for improvement, including our policy and support to the families of victims of murder and manslaughter to access justice, and will work to improve our services in these areas.

The Death Penalty

The UK government is opposed, on principled grounds, to the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. We will use all appropriate influence to prevent the execution of any British national. We intervene at whatever stage and level is judged appropriate from the moment a death sentence becomes a possibility. We will lobby at the senior political level when necessary, and did so in a number of countries in 2014.

At the end of 2014, there were 14 British nationals under the sentence of death in countries across the world. The most common offences were for drugs and murder, with one case of blasphemy and one of terrorism. Where death sentences have been imposed, we seek their review or commutation.

Representations were made on behalf of British nationals in a number of countries including **Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt** and the US. In one particular case in the US, we worked closely with lawyers on the FCO Pro Bono Legal Panel to submit an



Amicus Curiae (Third Party Interventions) Brief in support of a British national on death row.

We work closely with legal teams employed by British nationals who are facing the death penalty and we are supported in doing so by the NGOs Reprieve and the Death Penalty Project (DPP). In 2014, we worked closely with Reprieve on cases of British nationals in **Indonesia, Egypt, the United States, Ethiopia and Pakistan**. We worked closely with DPP on cases in **Kenya, Malaysia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, St Kitts and Ghana**. In 2015, we will continue to intervene in these and all such cases.

Overseas Prisoners

At the end of September, we were aware of over 2,190 British prisoners detained overseas in 99 countries, which is

a reduction from 2013. Of these, drug offences account for 35% of cases and child sex offences for 7% – a slight increase in each from 2013. Immigration detentions have decreased from 10% to 5%. We offer consular assistance to all British mono-nationals and dual nationals in a third country whether they are in police custody, awaiting trial, or serving a prison sentence, regardless of the crime with which they have been charged. In certain exceptional circumstances, we can help dual nationals in the country of their second nationality and nationals of other European and Commonwealth countries.

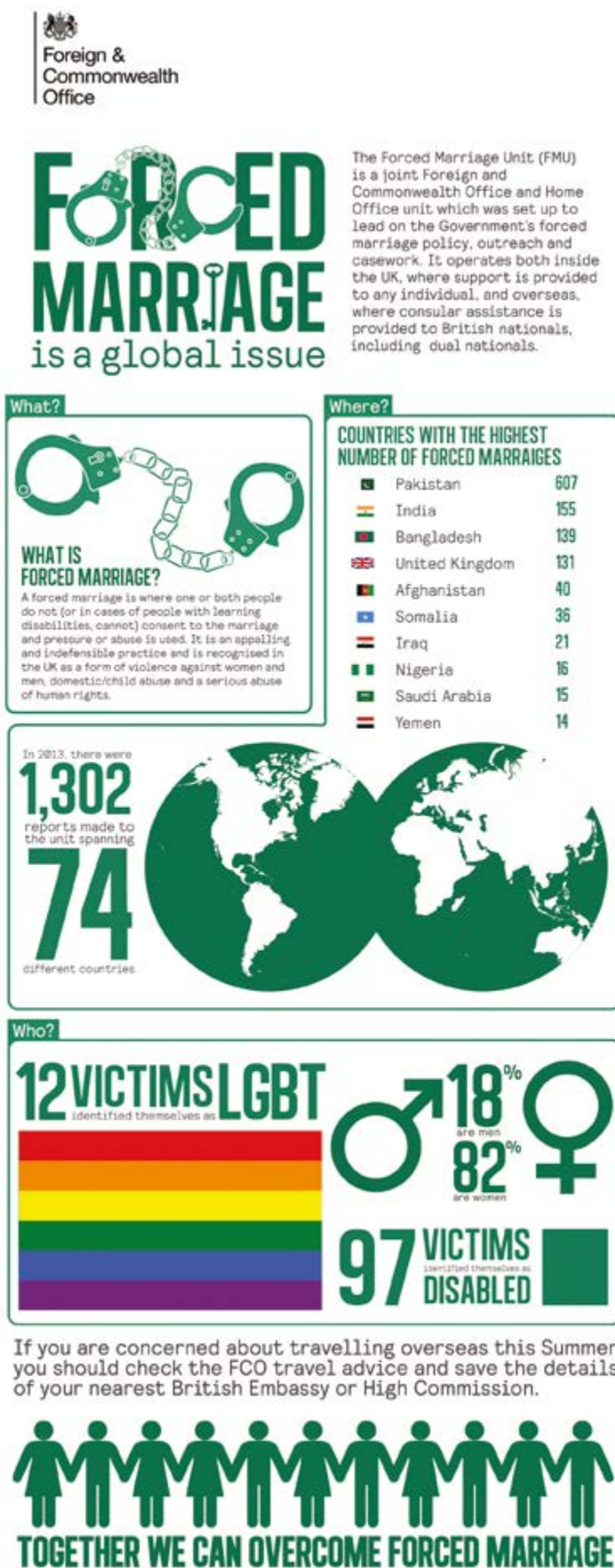
We aim to contact British detainees within 24 hours of being notified of their arrest or detention. Depending on the individual, country, and local circumstances in which they are detained, we will also seek to visit them as soon as possible afterwards. Our primary role is to monitor their welfare and to provide basic information about the local legal and penal system, including a list of English-speaking lawyers and interpreters, and the availability of legal aid.

We support the welfare of British detainees overseas in close partnership with Prisoners Abroad. This UK charity offers grants and vitamin supplements to improve the health and well-being of prisoners held overseas, and provides resettlement assistance on return to the UK. We work with them on over 1,000 cases a year, particularly those of prisoners with medical concerns. For example, we collaborated on a project to review and update 50 prisoner packs which offer guidance to detainees on legal and prison systems in each country. These packs are shared with prisoners during the first consular visit, and are available publicly on www.gov.uk. The project will continue aiming to update all packs by September 2015.

We are concerned about the increased number of deaths in custody during 2014. Some have been cases of detainees suffering from terminal illness. We are revising our internal guidance to assist consular staff in the correct, consistent handling of all deaths in custody; this will be completed in 2015. Along with Prisoners Abroad, we hold a review of each case to establish the facts of the case, and consider the assistance we provided and whether lessons can be learned for future cases.

We also part-fund and work closely with other NGOs to extend the level of legal or procedural support available to British prisoners held overseas. DPP, Reprieve, and Fair Trials International provide help and advice for British nationals who require specialist legal support, particularly when they are at risk of the death penalty, or have been convicted in countries where we have concerns for their right to a fair trial or safe treatment.

In 2015, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) will continue to work closely with our partners to assist British nationals imprisoned overseas. We will develop a new torture and mistreatment e-learning programme, and a new two-day workshop targeted at our staff in priority high-risk countries. By the end of 2015, we aim to have trained 36 staff in relevant roles. We will also continue to develop Prisoner Transfer Agreements with priority



Note: Infographic uses statistics from 2013

Case Study: Capacity-Building Projects in Latin America

During 2014, we supported capacity building projects to improve prison conditions and reduce mistreatment in countries where high numbers of British nationals are detained. In Latin America, a coordinated effort has already produced positive outcomes for British detainees held in some of the most dangerous and difficult prisons in the world. Many of these prisoners have worrying physical and mental health issues.

Prisoner Transfer Agreements (PTAs): the British Embassy in **Brazil** worked with the UK National Offenders Management Service to understand what was needed both in the UK and Brazil to put an agreement in place. The UK now completes more successful transfers than any other PTA-eligible country in Brazil.

Repatriation: until very recently, released foreign prisoners in **Peru** found themselves stranded without access to shelter or food. The process for repatriation could take up to two years or more. Following concerted lobbying by consular staff, the law has been changed so that the process can now be completed in two-and-

a-half months and can begin before the detainee is released. Additionally, a new law allows repatriation of foreign prisoners after meeting a third of their sentence. 24 of the 36 British nationals detained in Peru are eligible to apply.

Family contact: cooperation with **Brazilian** prison officials led in February to British prisoners being allowed controlled access to Skype so that they could keep in touch with their family in the UK.

Safety: in **Venezuela**, UK lobbying contributed to the opening of a new prison with a wing exclusively for non-violent foreign prisoners. This now means that all sentenced British nationals are in the same prison with improved and safe visiting facilities. We continue to lobby for the improvement of basic prison services, including food, water, and access to medical facilities.

Prison Reform: in **Panama**, we are working with UN Office of Drugs and Crime, the International Centre for Prison Studies, and the Panamanian Prison Services Academy to assist the Panamanian government to develop its prison reform program.

countries, to enable more British prisoners to serve their sentences in UK prisons, closer to family and support networks, and therefore better prepared for rehabilitation and release into society.

Murder and Manslaughter

We provided consular support in approximately 70 cases of murder and manslaughter overseas. This work includes helping bereaved families and friends seek access to justice. To support families doing this further, as part of our 2014 review of policy and services in this area, we are setting up a new and specialist Access to Justice Unit within our Consular Directorate.

Forced Marriage

The UK continues to remain one of the world leaders in tackling forced marriage. It is recognised as child abuse, domestic abuse, a form of violence against both women and men, and ultimately an abuse of human rights.

Following an extensive public consultation and a subsequent robust parliamentary process, forced marriage is now a criminal offence in the UK. The new legislation criminalises the use of violence, threats, deception or any other form of coercion for the purpose of forcing a person into marriage or to leave the UK, with the intention of forcing that person to marry. In addition, it also criminalises breach of a forced marriage protection order (FMPO) which can include forbidding a person to be taken overseas, or ordering that they be returned to the UK.

The new offences not only send out a clear message that this unacceptable practice will not be tolerated in the UK, but also ensure that perpetrators face severe penalties. The new legislation is part of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, and came into force on 16 June. We know that legislation alone is not enough, which is why we will

remain focused on the provision of prevention, support, and protection for victims and those at risk of becoming victims.

The UK continued to tackle the issue of forced marriage through the work of the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU), which is a joint FCO and Home Office unit. The FMU leads on the government's forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. It operates both inside the UK, where support is provided to any individual, and overseas, where consular assistance is provided to British nationals, including dual nationals. The FMU runs a helpline for victims of forced marriage and authorities and professionals seeking advice on handling forced marriage cases. It also develops policy on forced marriage and runs an extensive outreach programme.

The FMU provided advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in well over 1,000 cases, involving more than 60 countries. The assistance provided ranged from telephone advice, to aiding a victim to prevent their unwanted spouse moving to the UK, and returning victims of forced marriage overseas to the UK.

Our key message has been to raise awareness of the difference between forced and arranged marriage, as well as setting out how the new law works in practical terms. In 2014, the FMU delivered over 100 outreach events, seminars, and workshops for professionals across all agencies, schools and communities. It also co-funded a short film on forced marriage called "Our Girl", which premiered at the Girl Summit in July. The FMU has continued to remain active on social media. In July, as part of an awareness week, it delivered a digital campaign to highlight the issues around forced marriage, and also raise awareness of the support that is available for victims and potential victims.

We funded nine UK-based NGOs to carry out projects raising awareness of forced marriage, the consequences for perpetrators, and the wider support available for those who were at risk. Projects included reviewing the support available for learning disability victims, an education and awareness programme for schools and universities, empowering survivors,

and a community radio project aimed at promoting zero tolerance of forced marriage and honour-based violence. Our Embassies and High Commissions also funded local NGOs, enabling women's shelters and refuges to accommodate victims prior to their repatriation back to the UK. The British High Commission in Dhaka also oversaw forced marriage community projects to promote awareness in Attock, Jhelum and Rawalpindi, and ran a poster competition in Sylhet.

We have continued to raise awareness of forced and child marriage to our global workforce. In October, a second forced marriage training conference was held in **Dubai**. This was aimed at raising awareness with those colleagues overseas responsible for managing forced marriage cases, or in countries where evidence has identified a strong possibility of cases taking place.

The FMU has also been instrumental in pushing for forced marriage to remain high on the agenda of member countries of the International Partnership Board (IPB). The IPB is made up of members from Embassies and High Commissions based in London. The aim is to raise awareness of what is currently being done in the UK, exchange ideas and experiences, and build an international coalition working towards ending the practice of forced marriage.

We have remained committed to maintaining close working relationships with the EU and wider international partners, for example by delivering a presentation and sitting on an expert panel on forced marriage at the "Too Young to Wed" event in Oslo, as well as at an event in Copenhagen looking at honour-related conflicts. The FMU also attended Almedalen Week in Visby to speak about the UK's forced marriage approach, coinciding with the introduction of new forced marriage legislation in **Sweden** in June. We provided contributions to the UN Committee on the UK's implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child.

Forced marriage is considered a child protection and public protection issue in the UK. Our main focus in 2015 will be to ensure that implementation of the new legislation is fully embedded within all agencies responsible for safeguarding children and those at risk. To complement this activity, we will continue to raise awareness across communities in the UK, and expand our work in order to provide high-quality support to victims and those at risk of becoming victims.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as "cutting", "female circumcision" and "initiation". It is medically unnecessary, extremely painful, and can have serious physical and mental health consequences both at the time when the mutilation is carried out, and in later life.

FGM's prevalence in the UK is difficult to estimate because of the hidden nature of the crime. However, a new report by Equality Now and City University, published in July, estimated that approximately 60,000 girls aged 0-14 were born in England and Wales to mothers who had undergone FGM. It

also estimated that approximately 103,000 women aged 15-49 and 24,000 women aged 50 and over who have migrated to England and Wales are living with the consequences of FGM. In addition, approximately 10,000 girls aged under 15 who have migrated to England and Wales are likely to have undergone FGM.

The World Health Organisation estimates that more than 125 million girls and women alive today have been cut in the 29 countries in Africa and Middle East where FGM is most prevalent. It is also highly prevalent in **Indonesia**, and takes place within parts of Western Europe and other developed countries, primarily amongst immigrant and refugee communities.

UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include **Somalis, Kenyans, Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, Egyptians, Nigerians, Eritreans, Yemeni, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani** women and girls. FGM is not a religious requirement or obligation. It has no link with Islam and is not condoned by Christian teachings or the bible. While the UK recognises the practice of FGM is a criminal offence, it often takes place within loving families, who believe that it is in the best interests of their child.

In the UK, FGM has been a criminal offence since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 made it an offence for the first time for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM either at home or abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where FGM is legal.

In 2014, we continued to work with the Home Office, the Department of Health, and the Department for Education, to assist in tackling FGM. A joined-up approach across frontline agencies will be required to safeguard girls and protect women and, in December, the government launched a specialist cross-departmental FGM Unit to drive a step-change in nationwide outreach to safeguarding professionals and affected communities. Tackling FGM forms a key commitment in the UK government's "The Call to End Violence against Women and Girls: Action Plan". We are currently amending UK law to ensure that it applies to habitual as well as permanent UK residents, and to ensure that victims of FGM are granted life-long anonymity.

The FCO participates in cross-government work on FGM. Comprehensive guidance on how to handle cases is available to all staff. Our Embassies in the relevant countries display information on FGM. We have trained consular staff in East Africa on how best to respond to consular cases involving FGM, and are looking into options for further training. We are also working to establish links with local organisations that may be able to assist with such consular cases, and will continue to coordinate our action with local colleagues from the Department for International Development.

At the Girl Summit in July, the government announced an unprecedented package of measures to tackle FGM – *See "Case Study: the Girl Summit – Ending Female Genital Mutilation and Child, Early and Forced Marriage" on page 58 for further details.*

Child Abduction

International child abduction and the wrongful retention of children continues to be a growing problem. An increasing number of families have cultural or family links overseas and, when a relationship breaks down, one parent may take their children away to another country without the consent of the other parent. Whatever the reasons, the impact is profound. Children are denied regular close contact with the parent and family left behind, and may be less trusting of the parent who removed them. Being thrown into a new and unfamiliar environment can also be traumatic. In England and Wales, one parent removing a child overseas without the proper consent of the other parent or the permission of the courts may be a criminal offence. The UK is also a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Hague Abduction Convention), a multilateral treaty which provides for the return of children who have been abducted or retained overseas by a parent. In countries where the convention is not in place, parents often face lengthy and expensive custody disputes in foreign courts, with no guarantee that the child will come home.

In 2014, the FCO provided direct advice and assistance to 553 British families dealing with new international child abduction and cross-border custody cases. We offered parents advice and information about child abduction in the local context, provided assistance through informing relevant foreign authorities, helped to find local lawyers, and, where appropriate, made political representations. We also worked closely with UK police, social services, courts, lawyers and the specialist NGO Reunite to ensure families received coordinated support in the UK.

With the number of child abductions on the rise, we also worked to alert parents to the problem. On 19 December, the FCO ran its annual child abduction awareness-raising campaign, through which we explained what steps parents could take to prevent child abduction, and urged those who were worried about this issue to contact us for advice and support. The FCO film "Caught in the Middle", which underlines the traumatic and lasting impact child abduction can have on the whole family, was also re-released.

The FCO continues to encourage other countries to sign up to the Hague Abduction Convention. We believe this convention offers the best way of resolving child abductions in the best interests of the child. In 2014, FCO ministers continued to raise the issue with their counterparts, and we worked closely with **China** to promote the reciprocal benefits of the convention. Lady Justice Black, the Head of International Family Justice for England and Wales, paid a visit to China and engaged with local authorities and government on how the Hague Abduction Convention could help families. We also provided funds for a **Pakistani** judge to attend a conference of Hague liaison judges, to learn more about how the different Hague family law conventions work in practice.

In 2015, we will continue this work, by organising a number of family law and child abduction conferences in **Pakistan** and the **United Arab Emirates**, bringing judges, officials and NGOs together to explore how the Hague Abduction Convention works. Through continued high-level political

representations to foreign governments and projects with foreign activists, we will persuade more countries to sign and operate the Hague Abduction Convention, to the benefit of children around the world.



Photo: UK Mission to the United Nations in Geneva
September 2014: H.E Baroness Anelay, FCO Minister for Human
Rights, visited the Human Rights Council for the first time.

CHAPTER X: Working through a Rules-Based International System

The UN

The UN is a key vehicle for advancing the UK's priorities on human rights: it enables scrutiny of human rights violations worldwide; provides a forum for dialogue between states; and provides technical assistance to states on human rights in country. In 2014, the UK resumed its seat on the Human Rights Council (HRC), the UN's main intergovernmental human rights forum, which meets in Geneva three times a year. Throughout 2014, there was significant ministerial engagement with the HRC, which helped deliver UK priorities.

Other important UN human rights bodies include the UN General Assembly Third Committee (UNGA 3rd Committee) which meets annually in the autumn. Its main activity consists of resolutions on country situations and thematic issues to highlight progress or areas of concern, or to urge a state to do more e.g. to protect members of a particularly vulnerable group. These resolutions are voted on by all UN members. The UN Security Council (UNSC), which has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, also focused in 2014 on a number of conflicts and situations where human rights concerns were significant.

The UK supports the UN's expert human rights mechanisms, including Special Rapporteurs and treaty bodies (expert committees that monitor states' compliance with their human rights treaty obligations), as well as the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). This year we welcomed Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein to the role of High Commissioner. We applaud his high level of engagement with the UNSC, and the strong stance he has taken on issues such as ISIL, **Syria** and **Sri Lanka**.

We maintained our financial support for the operational structures of human rights in the UN, providing £2.5 million of funding in 2014, on top of our contribution to the UN Regular Budget. We provided a further £1.57 million to support OHCHR field offices around the world, including building capacity on human rights issues in **Tajikistan**, and promoting stability in **Kyrgyzstan** and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC). We also support efforts to make OHCHR more effective and to broaden its donor base. In 2014, the UK, as one of around 30 current members of the UN's Committee on Programme Coordination, worked with partners to secure a hard-won agreement on OHCHR's programme of activities for the next two years. This gives OHCHR a clear framework for its work.

For the UN to achieve its objectives on human rights, it needs to work effectively and respond to new challenges. We are therefore committed to supporting efforts to strengthen the UN system further, including working to mainstream human rights within the UN's development and peace and security agendas, and in the field.

Country initiatives

In March, the UK, alongside four other countries, led a HRC resolution calling on the government of **Sri Lanka** to make progress on human rights and reconciliation. FCO Minister for Asia, Hugo Swire, visited Geneva to speak out about the importance of the resolution, which also established an independent international investigation into the most serious violations and abuses of human rights during the Sri Lankan conflict. This was a major step forward which should make a positive contribution to long-term reconciliation in Sri Lanka and to establishing the truth about what happened. On 25 June, the UK welcomed the appointment by the High Commissioner for Human Rights of three distinguished experts to advise the independent investigation: Martti Ahtisaari, Dame Silva Cartwright, and Asma Jahangir. The council received an update on the investigation in September, where the UK called on Sri Lanka to engage with the process, and expressed our concern about threats and intimidation against those wanting to give evidence.

The UK has continued to play a leading role on **Syria** in human rights fora and has secured some important advances, including robust language on accountability and on the atrocities of ISIL. We also renewed the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) for a further year and brokered strong condemnation of the Assad regime, focused on the humanitarian crisis and continuing denial of access to Syria for the COI. In July, the UK hosted an Arria (informal) meeting of the UNSC with the COI, enabling council members to be briefed on their findings. Votes were harder at the three HRC sessions, where the current membership is less favourable towards country specific resolutions. But our Syria resolutions carried, nevertheless, and at the UNGA 3rd Committee the text attracted greater support than in 2013.

The damning report of the COI into human rights in **North Korea** (the DPRK), published in early 2014, highlighted the gravity of human rights concerns in the country, and provided important momentum for action over the past year. At the HRC, a resolution endorsed the main points of the report and

established a new field office (to be based in Seoul) which will continue to document human rights violations in the DPRK as an important step towards future accountability. It also renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. We secured powerful language on accountability, which recommended the UNSC consider referring the human rights situation in the DPRK to the “appropriate international criminal justice mechanism”. Mr Swire travelled to Geneva in June to draw attention to the report at a briefing by Special Rapporteur Marzuki Darusman. This was followed by an Arria briefing of the UNSC in New York on human rights in the DPRK. The UK, as part of the EU, brought a UNGA 3rd Committee text that went one step further and made clear that the appropriate criminal justice mechanism would be the International Criminal Court (ICC). On 22 December, the UNSC convened under a new agenda item of “the situation in the DPRK” to discuss the human rights situation. The procedural vote establishing the agenda item was carried by eleven votes in favour (including the UK) to two against (**China, Russia**) with two abstentions. The UNSC then heard briefings from Assistant Secretary-Generals for Human Rights (Ivan Simonovic) and Political Affairs (Tayé-Brook Zerihoun), which was the first ever formal meeting of the council on DPRK human rights.

Russia’s destabilisation of **Ukraine** sparked action across all three HRC sessions of 2014. In March, the UK supported a United States-led cross-regional statement on Ukraine that expressed deep concern at the deterioration of the situation in the country and challenged Russia’s narrative of human rights violations as a justification for its military incursion. In June, a resolution supporting UN technical assistance to Ukraine on human rights, and condemning violence by illegal armed groups, was adopted following sensitive negotiations and a difficult vote. In October, the UK used the publication of the OHCHR’s 6th report on human rights in Ukraine as a peg to request an open UNSC session. At that session, the UK stressed its support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity, and condemned violations by armed groups in eastern Ukraine and Crimea supported by Russia. We further supported Ukraine’s sovereignty in the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) – the UN’s specialised agency for information and communication technologies – reiterating UN Resolution 68/262 (2014) on Ukraine’s territorial integrity.

For the March HRC, the UK worked closely with the **Libyan** authorities to agree a strong resolution that provided technical assistance to Libya and requested a report from the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation. The adopted text was stronger than the previous year’s and passed by consensus.

The March HRC also voted to renew the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in **Iran** for a further year. The more substantive text on Iran in UNGA 3rd Committee detailed numerous human rights concerns, including use of the death penalty and the harassment of journalists. On 31 October, the UK took part in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Iran’s human rights situation. The UK urged Iran to put an immediate moratorium on the execution of juveniles and those who committed crimes not recognised as “most serious”;

and to allow detainees access to a lawyer at all stages of pre-trial detention.

Resolutions on the human rights situation in **Burma** passed by consensus in both the HRC and the UNGA 3rd Committee. Both were negotiated in close cooperation with Burma and included concerns about the Rohingya and other minorities in Rakhine State, whilst recognising the efforts to bring about reforms in some areas. The HRC resolution also renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further year, and urged Burma to establish an OHCHR country office with a full mandate.

The September HRC resolution on **Sudan** was stronger than previous years, giving the Independent Expert a solid mandate to report on the human rights situation. It condemned aerial bombardments of civilians, restrictions on the media and civil society, and the killing of protestors in September 2013. However, the resolution could have been tougher on torture, the treatment of apostasy, and legal reform. Not fully satisfied with the outcome, the UK led a joint statement calling on Sudan to demonstrate its commitment to the HRC, and setting out areas where we will look to Sudan to make progress over the next year. The FCO Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, has also written to the new UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, expressing our deep concerns.

UK diplomatic efforts helped achieve other important decisions, such as the renewal of the UN monitoring mandate on human rights in **Belarus**, which included tougher language on the death penalty and political prisoners; the establishment of a COI on **Eritrea** and renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur; the renewal of the UN’s monitoring and reporting role on **Yemen** for a further 12 months; and agreement to discuss at the HRC in September 2015 the impact of assistance provided to the **DRC**. Despite a UN report which found that “gross violations of human rights and serious violations of humanitarian law have occurred on a massive scale” in **South Sudan** since the outset of the conflict, and that there were “reasonable grounds to believe crimes against humanity occurred,” a weak resolution deferring any further UN scrutiny until 2016 was presented to the HRC. South Sudan agreed to revisions to the final resolution which gave the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights a mandate to monitor and report on the human rights situation. We will use this to facilitate a robust UN response and to maintain pressure on the South Sudan government. The UK also supported cross-regional statements on the human rights situations in **Bahrain** and **Egypt**, and raised our concerns on a range of country and thematic situations through our national statements.

The HRC also met for three Special Sessions in 2014 on the **Central African Republic** (CAR), Gaza, and the rise of ISIL in **Iraq**. The January Special Session appointed an Independent Expert to investigate the continued and widespread violations of human rights in the CAR. Her mandate was extended in September for another year, in a strong resolution which called for an end to impunity, and referred to the CAR’s decision to request the ICC prosecutor to investigate violations. The July Special Session was in response to the **Gaza** crisis, and resulted in a mandate to establish a COI to investigate all

violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights law during the crisis, and to report back to the HRC in March 2015. The UK continues to work hard to ensure that the COI is balanced in its treatment of both sides and contributes positively to peace. In September, a Special Session of the HRC unanimously condemned ISIL human rights abuses in Iraq, sending a resounding message of solidarity with the government and people of Iraq. Over 70 states from all regional groups addressed the HRC, with widespread calls for accountability. The session mandated the OHCHR to despatch a mission to investigate and report on violations and abuses.

Thematic issues

Several important thematic issues were the subject of HRC and UNGA 3rd Committee attention. In these fora, we continued to demonstrate global leadership, with particular focus on our six human rights priorities. The EU's **freedom of religion or belief** resolutions were adopted by consensus by both the HRC and the 3rd Committee. The resolutions delivered an unambiguous statement on the importance of states taking action to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief, including the right to change one's religion. The resolutions are run in parallel with the Organisation of the Islamic Conference resolutions on religious intolerance.

The EU-led **death penalty** resolution in UNGA was adopted with the highest ever vote count in favour in the history of the resolution. The text was also stronger than in previous years, including a call upon states to restrict the use of the death penalty on persons with mental disabilities. This result reflects the UK and partners' sustained long-term efforts to work with countries to commit to a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

The UK supported the adoption of the second ever **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)** resolution at the September HRC session. The initiative sought to reduce polarisation and reinforce agreement on the inadmissibility of violence (a highest common factor approach). But the resolution was nevertheless a high stakes exercise, with implications for the enjoyment of human rights by LGB&T persons, and for the ability of the HRC to uphold the universality of human rights. With like-minded countries, the UK lobbied middle ground states to support the resolution. This likeminded group also worked to protect SOGI language and to strengthen concepts of inclusion and non-discrimination in other UN human rights resolutions.

The Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and the London Girl Summit were important landmarks in the progression of the rights agenda for **women** and girls and were recalled in relevant UNGA and HRC resolutions. However, it remains difficult to secure a strong and progressive stance on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the UN context.

We continued to oppose a number of initiatives that, in the UK's view, misrepresent human rights or would be counter-productive in practice. For example, contradictory resolutions on business and human rights were adopted by the HRC. We supported the resolution which focused on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and opposed the resolution which called for the

establishment of a legally binding mechanism. The adoption of this second resolution damages the international consensus which has existed since the UNGPs were agreed in 2011, a point made vigorously by the UK, EU and other proponents of the first resolution.

Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The UK is a prominent supporter of the UPR process, whereby the human rights records of UN member states are subject to peer review in a four-and-a-half-year cycle. The UPR examined 42 countries in 2014, including **Afghanistan, Vietnam, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Yemen, the DRC, the DPRK, Egypt, Iran and Iraq.**

During 2014, the UK took two initiatives to underscore our faith in the utility of UPR, and our commitment to following and sharing best practice. In August, the UK submitted a voluntary mid-term report (produced by the Ministry of Justice), which updated the HRC on action taken on recommendations from our UPR examination in 2012. At the 27th session of the HRC in September, the UK, represented by FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, staged jointly with **Morocco's** Minister for Human Rights a well attended event which generated expert discussion on the benefits of UPR, and how best to prepare national reports.

Treaty Monitoring Bodies

British experts, who work independently of the government, continued to play distinguished roles on a number of human rights treaty monitoring bodies. Professor Sir Nigel Rodley worked as Chair of the Human Rights Committee; Professor Malcolm Evans as Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Prevention of Torture; and Diane Mulligan on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Patrick Thornberry, the UK's former expert member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, chaired the 2014 Forum on Minority Issues on "Preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities" in November. We admire their contributions to the UN's crucial human rights treaty monitoring system, and those of many other independent UK experts in a host of different capacities.

We strongly support efforts to improve the system's efficiency, and welcome the conclusion of negotiations in the UN General Assembly during 2014 on reforms to the UN's human rights treaty monitoring system. Our priority now is to ensure that momentum is maintained with full implementation of the agreed recommendations. We want to see a stronger focus on the independence of treaty monitoring bodies, and the protection and involvement of civil society organisations that support them.

EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

The UK government works through the EU to promote and amplify its work on human rights and democracy around the world. The EU's reputation and its status as the world's largest aid donor and major economic actor, gives it significant influence in promoting respect for human rights worldwide. Working through the EU and its member states, and speaking with one voice on issues of shared concern, can increase our

impact in individual countries and strengthen delivery of UK human rights priorities in multilateral fora.

This involves the UK and other member states working closely with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission to make full use of the EU's human rights tools. These include: making joint representations or public statements on issues of concern; bilateral and multilateral meetings with international partners; EU human rights dialogues with third countries; the use of development assistance programmes to fund projects that contribute to human rights objectives; and the mainstreaming of human rights in policy areas such as trade and investment and Common Security and Defence Policy.

In November, Mrs Federica Mogherini succeeded Baroness Ashton as the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission. Mrs Mogherini has stated that human rights will be one of her overarching priorities; since taking office, she has spoken forcefully on human rights issues. The EU's external human rights policy is set out in the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, which foreign ministers adopted in June 2012.

EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR)

In 2014, the EUSR, Mr Stavros Lambrinidis, continued to fulfil his mandate to contribute to the effectiveness, visibility and coherence of the EU's external human rights policy. He articulated the EU's messages on important human rights themes, including the death penalty, freedom of religion or belief, LGBT rights, freedom of expression online and offline, business and human rights, women's rights, and the rights of the child. The EUSR represented the EU's position on human rights in a number of important multilateral and international fora, including the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (March), the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict (June), the Girl Summit (July), the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (September) and the 3rd UN Forum on Business and Human Rights (December).

Mr Lambrinidis has engaged with multilateral and regional organisations, including the UN human rights mechanisms in Geneva and New York, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as with individual countries. He engaged extensively with countries that have an important role in international human rights fora and countries facing serious human rights challenges. He also visited a number of countries, including **Egypt, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, the United States, and Burma**, where he co-chaired the first EU-Burma Human Rights Dialogue in May. In November, he hosted the first delegation of the Independent Commission on Human Rights of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to visit the EU in Brussels.

Human rights dialogues

The EU's human rights dialogues with third countries are in-depth meetings dedicated to human rights, and are a valuable tool for developing mutual understanding and cooperation. They enable the EU to exchange views with partner countries,

to raise specific issues of concern, and to acknowledge progress where appropriate. During 2014, the EU held bilateral human rights dialogues with (in addition to **Burma**): **Mexico** (March), **Brazil** (April), **Kyrgyzstan** (April), **Tajikistan** (June), **Ukraine** (July), **South Africa** (November), **Uzbekistan** (November), **Kazakhstan** (November), **China** (December) and **Armenia** (December). The EU and **Laos** held the fifth round of their annual Working Group on Human Rights and Governance in May.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

The EIDHR is the EU's worldwide funding programme for human rights and democracy. In March, the EU adopted a regulation which renewed EIDHR for the period 2014-20, with a total financial envelope of more than €1.3 billion. The annual programme for EIDHR in 2014 included allocations of €20 million for supporting human rights and their defenders where they are most at risk, €82.3 million for supporting local civil society through country-based schemes, €5 million for supporting national human rights institutions, and €4 million for supporting the OHCHR.

EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression

In May, the EU's Foreign Affairs Council adopted EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression online and offline, which is one of the UK's six priority human rights themes. The guidelines reaffirm the pivotal role that freedom of expression plays in a democratic society, both as a fundamental right in itself and as an essential element in a full range of human rights, such as freedom of association and freedom of religion or belief. The UK helped to develop the guidelines; we consider them to be a valuable tool for EU delegations and embassies of EU member states in their work to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is more widely guaranteed, and that any violations are tackled in the most effective manner. The UK also worked closely with the EU in a range of countries to raise individual cases of violations of the right to freedom of expression.

The guidelines complement the 10 existing policy guidelines that the EU had adopted before 2014 for the advancement of other human rights themes. These cover the death penalty; torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; freedom of religion or belief; LGBT rights; human rights dialogues with third countries; children and armed conflict; human rights defenders (HRDs); the rights of the child; violence and discrimination against women and girls; and international humanitarian law.

In June, on the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, the EU Foreign Affairs Council reiterated its strong support for HRDs all over the world, and committed the EU to intensifying its political and material support for them.

Freedom of expression online and offline was the theme of the 16th EU-NGO (non-governmental organisation) Human Rights Forum, held in Brussels on 4-5 December. This event provided a platform for hundreds of civil society organisations from across the globe to have their voices heard by representatives

of the EU institutions, international and regional human rights organisations, and member states, including the UK.

In 2015, the EU's external human rights policy will continue to be guided by the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy. The EU has implemented this policy through an Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which was adopted alongside the Strategic Framework in 2012, and which is due to be renewed in 2015. Through the action plan, the EU has upgraded its working methods, set up a network of human rights focal points in EU delegations and at headquarters, and adopted guidelines to support EU policies in key human rights areas. The EU has also developed nearly 150 human rights country strategies and continues to engage in human rights consultations with many countries. The UK has participated in discussions on a new action plan, which we believe should build on the progress made by focusing on areas where there is a need for further action and where the EU can make a real difference.

The EU's own assessment of its work on human rights will be contained in the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2014, which will be published in 2015.

EU Enlargement

The UK remains a strong supporter of conditions-based EU enlargement to all the countries of the Western Balkans and **Turkey**. This includes support for the emphasis the EU accession process places on human rights. The importance of applicant countries adhering to the EU's human rights values and laws is emphasised throughout the accession process that governs their road to EU membership. Institutions that guarantee human rights are a core part of the Copenhagen Criteria for accession to the EU. Enlargement therefore provides a powerful vehicle to drive human rights reform and compliance among all countries seeking to join the EU. The government's Balance of Competences report on EU enlargement, published in December 2014, also received evidence on the impact of enlargement on respect for human rights across Europe. It concluded that "evidence suggested that enlargement had successfully helped extend... greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms".

In its October 2014 Annual Enlargement Strategy, the European Commission, in reaffirming the importance of countries' respect for human rights, noted that enlargement countries "need to put in place a more robust institutional framework for the protection of fundamental rights", including a stronger role for Ombudsmen. It noted that "too often recommendations of [human rights] institutions go unheeded, with inadequate follow-up by state bodies". It also highlighted the need to nurture "a culture of acceptance of the work of NGOs and HRDs".

As part of its role in supporting a firm but fair conditions-based approach to enlargement, the UK championed the "new approach", under which candidate countries begin negotiation of rule of law issues – including fundamental rights – from the beginning of the accession process. We welcome the fact that financial EU assistance to candidate countries through the

Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA II) will be provided in line with this "new approach".

The EU's next enlargement is expected sometime in the early 2020s. Eight countries are recognised by the EU as having the potential to become members, but one of them – **Iceland** – has suspended its accession negotiations. **Turkey** has been in accession negotiations since 2005. **Montenegro** opened its accession negotiations in 2012. **Serbia** commenced accession negotiations in 2014. **Macedonia** and **Albania** have attained candidate status, in 2005 and 2014 respectively, but neither country has yet opened accession negotiations.

Albania achieved candidate status for EU membership in June. The UK welcomes the European Commission Annual Progress Report on Albania of October, which notes progress on fundamental rights issues. We would encourage the Albanian government to sustain the process of reform and, in particular, to put substantial effort into further judicial reform to underpin other activity. FCO projects delivered through the Slynn Foundation aim to improve Albania's judiciary by increasing its quality and independence, thereby strengthening the rule of law. We are also working with the Albanian prison service to further improve and help modernise its operations.

The European Commission report makes clear that fundamental rights are generally respected in **Albania**. However, the Albanian government needs to continue to implement measures to protect vulnerable groups, including increased child protection capacity. Cooperation between state authorities and civil society on LGBT issues has improved. In order to provide an objective assessment of the situation, we engaged an independent expert to produce an update to the 2010 report for the Council of Europe on LGBT rights in Albania. This describes considerable progress over the 2010-14 period, and strong commitment from government to engage on this issue. We have also engaged the Albert Kennedy Trust, a UK NGO established to serve LGBT young people who are homeless, living in a hostile environment, or in housing crisis, to assist the establishment of a shelter in Tirana.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has strong legislation in the field of human rights, but problems remain with selective implementation. The International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict was first launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with the associated training modules to improve work in preventing and responding to sexual violence. To support survivors, we launched an NGO-run helpline offering those affected by conflict, including sexual violence and children born out of rape, immediate access to local expert support.

The UK also contributed funds to the International Commission on Missing Persons to support the recovery and identification of human remains from one of **Bosnia and Herzegovina's** biggest mass graves. With the UK's timely contribution, the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) allowed the prosecution to reopen and strengthen its case against Mladić by presenting this evidence, to achieve the ICTY's aim of bringing war criminals to justice.

Ethnic minorities, the Roma population, persons with disabilities, LGBT persons, and other vulnerable groups still

suffer from discrimination. Our Embassy was one of the few international organisations to fly the rainbow flag on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, thereby demonstrating our support for LGBT rights. Freedom of speech and the right of peaceful assembly and of association has deteriorated, as has the position of HRDs. We worked with HRDs and local NGOs to support their presentation of a shadow UPR report, ensuring their assessment was highlighted in an international arena.

In **Kosovo**, the UK continues to support a number of human rights-related projects, primarily in the areas of minority rights, victims' rights, and property rights. We have provided training to build the capacity of legal professionals dealing with war crimes; worked with the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for the Victims of Torture to help improve care for victims of sexual violence and to develop new legislation that recognises the victims of sexual violence in conflict; and supported minorities in accessing education and developing business opportunities. We continue to fund a number of secondees to the EU's rule of law mission (EULEX) and to Kosovo institutions to strengthen the rule of law and minority rights.

As noted in the 2014 European Commission progress report, **Kosovo** made some progress on human rights last year, in particular on freedom of thought, conscience and religion, but there remain areas of concern, in particular the need to strengthen the institutional framework to ensure adequate protection of minority rights. Kosovo took another step towards closer EU integration with the initialling of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement in July 2014. With the new government in place, we hope 2015 will see progress on key areas such as electoral reform and visa liberalisation.

The UK welcomes the latest European Commission progress report on **Macedonia**, which states that, given its cumulative progress over several years, Macedonia continues to meet the political criteria in terms of alignment with the EU *acquis* (the EU's entire body of law). However, that positive recommendation is increasingly overshadowed by serious concerns over lack of political dialogue, politicisation of institutions and services, and media freedom. The UK continues to believe that the best way to address these concerns is through the opening of EU accession negotiations and the EU's scrutiny of Macedonia's compliance with its standards and requirements.

Over the coming year, the UK will be calling on all stakeholders in **Macedonia** to make efforts to resolve its political crisis, increase the space for independent voices, and develop a joint approach to a multi-ethnic society. The UK would also like to see more done to counteract intolerance of LGBT persons, and notes with concern the attack on an LGBT centre in Skopje on 23 October, which should be fully investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. The FCO uses its programme tools to contribute to these goals, such as supporting inter-ethnic education, increasing awareness of the concept of hate speech, and making information on government services open to all citizens.

The UK funded a number of projects in **Montenegro** primarily in the areas of fundamental rights and justice. We supported a project aimed at strengthening the protection of the right

to a fair trial, and funded another on the journalistic code of ethics. We also worked with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to organise a conference focusing on strengthening the social skills and social development of children in education. Another project targeting primary schools promoted women's rights and the fight against human trafficking. In addition, our Embassy directly supported the organisation of Montenegro's third ever Pride parade in Podgorica, which took place peacefully. The UK also continues to work with Montenegrin judges on the application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The 2014 European Commission progress report acknowledged some further progress on fundamental rights, noting positively **Montenegro's** gradual familiarisation with international reporting mechanisms, welcome amendments to its Ombudsman law, and its Roma action plan. However, the report also noted that progress was uneven, with a continuing gap between legal alignment and implementation of human rights standards. There remained concerns about attacks against the media, LGBT persons and activists, and the ongoing overall discrimination against the Roma community.

In **Serbia**, the UK has continued to be at the forefront of advocacy for human rights and minority rights. In September we welcomed the staging of the first Pride parade in Belgrade since 2010, having consistently pressed the Serbian government on ensuring the conditions to allow it to go ahead. Our Embassy has also played an important role in supporting the adoption of the national Anti-Discrimination Strategy Action Plan. In addition, we have supported several projects promoting human rights, including one that is helping Serbia develop its training curriculum on European human rights law for the Serbian judiciary, and another seeking to strengthen the capacity of Serbia's Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality.

The 2014 European Commission progress report noted that the legislative framework for protection of human rights and minorities is generally in place, but that the **Serbian** government still needs to do more to ensure that rights are consistently respected in practice and vulnerable groups protected. Having started accession negotiations to join the EU in 2014, Serbia is currently drafting an action plan for the provisions dealing with fundamental rights. Progress in this area will remain important for the overall pace of Serbia's negotiations. The UK will continue to use the process of EU accession as a tool to encourage further progress on human and minority rights in 2015.

The EU accession process can provide an effective framework for the promotion of democratic reform and human rights in **Turkey**, and, in 2014, Turkey re-affirmed its commitment to the EU accession process. The UK continues to call for the opening of accession negotiation chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security) as a means of facilitating a dedicated dialogue between the EU and Turkey and intensifying cooperation with Turkey on human rights reform. The 2014 European Commission progress report highlighted where progress has been made, but also areas of concern around the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, the rule of law, and restrictions on freedom of

expression, including temporary bans on social media imposed by the Turkish government.

The UK supports the Commission's assessment of **Turkey's** overall performance. In 2014, we saw the adoption of an Action Plan on Prevention of European Convention on Human Rights Violations, and Turkey continued to build and develop the capacity of its human rights institutions. However, there is still much to do to implement action plans, strengthen further the human rights institutional framework, and bring Turkish human rights legislation into line with European and global standards, including on rights for minority religious and ethnic groups.

In 2013-14, the UK government committed funds worth nearly £1 million to support human rights and other projects aimed at promoting EU standards in **Turkey**. The UK also maintains links with NGOs and HRDs operating in Turkey.

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

The ENP offers a privileged relationship to 16 of the EU's neighbours in the east and the south. Human rights and democracy are a core element of the policy. The EU uses both "hard and soft instruments", such as its economic influence and financial aid, to promote political reforms in the countries of its neighbourhood in order to build and consolidate democracy, and establish and strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights. The EU links its support to the level of democratic reform, offering more to those partners that make progress, whilst reconsidering support where reform is not forthcoming. In 2014, the newly appointed EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, announced that a review of the ENP would be a priority in 2015. The UK strongly supports such a review. It must take a substantive look at how we can make the EU and the ENP more effective, flexible and focused on delivering substantive change in a very wide range of partner countries.

Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine signed Association Agreements with the EU on 27 June 2014. The benefits of the agreements include closer economic and political ties with the EU. The agreements also seek to strengthen the stability, independence and effectiveness of institutions to promote democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The European Commission will prepare a public annual progress report to assess the quality of implementation.

Alongside the human rights commitments created under the EU Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, **Georgia** has made good progress on human rights in 2014. In March, the Georgian government adopted its Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan, an outcome of wide consultation, including with the EU's Special Adviser to Georgia on Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg. This was a welcome initiative, but Georgia must now look to its implementation. Georgia's anti-discrimination legislation, passed in May, was also an important step forward, demonstrating Georgia's commitment to protecting the rights of minorities. The legislation covers all forms of discrimination and was a condition of progressing the EU Visa Liberalisation Programme. While good progress has been made in reforming the justice

sector, more remains to be done. There are concerns over the independence of the Prosecutor's Office, and we encourage Georgia to ensure that all prosecutions follow the rule of law and due process.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' (ODIHR) report on the parliamentary elections held in **Moldova** on 30 November 2014 found that they were generally well administered. Although the late de-registration of the **Russian-backed** Patria Party raised questions about timing and circumstances, the OSCE/ODIHR Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, issued on 1 December, concluded that the "elections offered voters a wide choice of political alternatives" and the technical conduct of the elections was "in line with international standards and norms".

The human rights situation in **Moldova** is improving. However, there are still considerable issues around discrimination against the LGB&T community, minority groups (particularly the Roma) and persons with disabilities. De facto authorities in Tiraspol continue to control the breakaway Transnistria region of Moldova, making it difficult for the Moldovan government in Chişinău to enforce country-wide human rights standards.

The results of presidential and parliamentary elections held in **Ukraine** during 2014 showed that the Ukrainian people overwhelmingly want to see their country break with its past and adopt European standards of governance. Following the signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, President Poroshenko announced a raft of reforms in order to align the country more closely to European standards, including on anti-corruption, judicial reform and police sector reform. The EU is providing support to Ukraine in these areas. In July, the EU established a civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) advisory mission to support security sector reform, policing and the rule of law. The EU is also funding projects to support governance, democracy, human rights and support for economic and institutional reforms.

In October, President Poroshenko signed a decree to initiate a National Human Rights Strategy to cover wider human rights concerns in **Ukraine**, such as the right to freedom and personal inviolability, and the right of freedom of expression and access to information. The development of a National Action Plan for Human Rights, which will guide implementation of the strategy, was discussed at a meeting in Kyiv in December, held under the auspices of the UN and co-organised by the OHCHR and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. The UK welcomes the positive steps the government of Ukraine is taking to address human rights concerns at a time when the country is facing daunting challenges to its security, integrity and development. We will continue to support Ukraine in this work, and we encourage them to continue to draw on the advice and expertise of international organisations, such as the UN and OSCE, as they tackle the challenges ahead.

The situation in Crimea and eastern **Ukraine** is discussed in a dedicated section in this report.

The EU/**Morocco** relationship reflects the UK's objective to support democratic reform in Morocco. In 2014, the UK endorsed the implementation of the 2013-2017 EU-Morocco

Action Plan. Through this, the EU provides Morocco with political and financial assistance, including through a wide range of projects which support democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance. Projects include support for: Morocco's National Council and Inter-Ministerial Delegation of Human Rights; its National Equality Plan; its Justice Reform programme; its migration policy; its literacy programme; and the "Hakama" (governance) programme. Morocco has benefited from the EU's programme for strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Mediterranean in the areas of: improving the efficiency of the courts; the independence and transparency of the judicial system; good governance; and the fight against corruption. The EU also supports Morocco's Education Strategy, focusing on increasing access to education for girls and children from impoverished families. Much has been achieved in 2014, but more needs to be done to make progress in crucial areas required to implement the 2011 constitution. Morocco's human rights achievements include its new migration policy, the reform of the code of military justice, the adoption of the organic finance law, and the deposition of instruments of ratification of the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

In **Jordan**, the UK has played a prominent role in protecting the rights of over 620,000 refugees from **Syria**, alongside EU partners. This work has formed part of the UK's overall commitment of more than £220 million to Jordan since the start of the Syria crisis. Following the closure of Jordan's border with Syria in late September, the UK worked with EU partners to press for its reopening and for Jordanian authorities to assist vulnerable women and children. Subsequently, Jordan partially reopened its border. The UK has also engaged with the Jordanian government on reducing restrictions to educational and health services for refugees. On 4 December, the European Neighbourhood Instrument announced a package worth approximately £51.6 million to assist the Ministry of Education host up to 140,000 Syrian refugee children in Jordanian schools. In addition, the UK committed £15 million bilaterally to improve the quality of education for all early grade primary school children in Jordan, and to help integrate Syrian refugees into the education system. On 21 December, the Jordanian authorities executed 11 death row inmates, the first executions to take place since 2006. The UK and EU issued statements condemning the use of capital punishment. The UK, in tandem with EU partners, continues to lobby for the introduction of a moratorium on all further use of the death penalty. In line with the EU-Jordan Action Plan, the UK and EU continue to support the King's vision of political and economic reform in Jordan, including greater freedom of expression.

In **Lebanon**, international efforts continued to provide humanitarian and development assistance to protect the rights of over 1.1 million refugees from **Syria** and vulnerable host communities. Since the start of the Syria crisis, the UK has contributed approximately £150 million to help provide food, shelter, health and education to vulnerable groups in Lebanon. On 4 December, the European Commission announced a package worth approximately £57 million to help Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon. In 2014 the Lebanese Parliament passed new legislation on domestic violence but, due to political paralysis, the Parliament

did not adopt the National Human Rights Action Plan, nor did it consider pending legislation on torture, which the UN Committee against Torture concluded was "a pervasive practice" in Lebanon. The EU-Lebanon dialogue on human rights addressed the committee's report and other human rights issues in line with the EU-Lebanon ENP Action Plan, including women's and children's rights, human rights in law enforcement, and implementing the agreed recommendations in the UN's UPR for Lebanon. In October, the EU allocated more than £101 million to Lebanon for the period 2014-2016 for a variety of sectors, including justice and security reform. The UK Ambassador to Lebanon also participated in a university debate on human rights in challenging security contexts, organised by the Delegation of the EU to Lebanon to mark Human Rights Day. On 16 January 2014, the trials in absentia of four of the five individuals suspected of killing former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri began at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL); the UK has contributed £5.5 million to support the STL's essential work thus far.

The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 countries committed to the shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The UK has long recognised and sought to develop the potential the Commonwealth offers to promote and enforce human rights standards across its membership. In 2014, we continued in this vein providing over £15 million in funding to the Commonwealth Secretariat. We encouraged the secretariat to focus on areas of comparative advantage where it can add value, especially around its convening and networking roles, and by pressing for the secretariat and member states to be more vigilant in ensuring commitments enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter are upheld.

The charter brings together the 16 core values and principles that unite the Commonwealth, including democracy, human rights, tolerance, respect and understanding, freedom of expression, rule of law, and gender equality. While recognising that member states are at different stages of implementation of the charter, the UK believes the commitments within should be adhered to and kept under review by member governments, parliaments and civil society organisations. As FCO Minister for the Commonwealth, Hugo Swire, has made clear, we believe that member states "not only have a moral obligation to uphold and promote what they agreed to in 2012 – but that it is in their own national self-interest to do so." Throughout 2014, we encouraged the secretariat and members of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) to ensure that member states are putting in place the necessary measures to realise their charter commitments.

In 2014, in line with the Commonwealth's Strategic Plan 2013/14 - 2016/17, the secretariat continued its work to strengthen public institutions and promote and protect human rights in the Commonwealth. Election monitoring remained a key strength of the organisation, an area where the Commonwealth can offer needed experience and expertise. The UK also provided additional funding in support of the national elections in the **Solomon Islands**. We acknowledge the vital role the Commonwealth special envoys can play in

helping member states implement the recommendations made by the Commonwealth's election observation missions.

The secretariat maintained its technical assistance to the Commonwealth Forum for National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI). We welcome this: the CFNHRI has played an important part in ensuring that internationally accepted human rights standards result in improved enjoyment of human rights within Commonwealth countries. We particularly welcome CFNHRI's work in highlighting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, which has been identified as a key issue, particularly by the African members of CFNHRI. Throughout 2014, the UK has continued to press Commonwealth members to respect the rights of the LGBT&T community. We welcome the increased number of statements on this issue by the Commonwealth Secretary-General. Nevertheless, discrimination remains and we will continue to urge action from the secretariat and member states to uphold the Commonwealth's values of tolerance, respect and understanding for all its communities.

The secretariat continued to strengthen member states' engagement with the UN's UPR process. This included providing much needed technical assistance to member states to implement the UPR recommendations. In March, the secretariat, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, continued its series of regional seminars to strengthen parliamentarians' understanding of their role in the protection and promotion of human rights under the UPR. The seminar for African parliamentarians was held in Mahé, **Seychelles**. African Commonwealth parliamentarians agreed the Mahé Declaration, recognising parliament as a key institution safeguarding and upholding the rights of citizens and its corresponding role in the promotion and protection of human rights, and affirming the values and principles as contained in the Commonwealth Charter.

In May, the UK attended the triennial Commonwealth Law Ministers' meeting in Gaborone, **Botswana**. The theme was "Consolidating the Rule of Law and Human Rights in the Commonwealth". The meeting was attended by Law Ministers and Attorney Generals from 28 countries. Ministers discussed human rights successes in the Commonwealth and agreed that the secretariat should, amongst other recommendations, continue its technical assistance and capacity-building programmes to address violence against women and provide assistance upon request to countries regarding accession to the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. They also acknowledged civil society could have a valuable role in an open and transparent democratic process.

In September, CMAG agreed to lift **Fiji's** partial suspension from the Commonwealth in recognition of the significant steps that Fiji had taken on the road to full democracy. This was an example of CMAG enforcing its role as the custodian of Commonwealth values. We welcomed the Secretary-General's statement that the CMAG members will consider the full breadth of its enhanced and constructive mandate when the group next meets in March 2015.

In December, the Commonwealth Secretariat's Human Rights Unit marked Human Rights Day with an important event at

Lancaster House, on the theme of women's empowerment. The Secretary-General introduced a panel of eminent speakers, who addressed issues ranging from sexual violence in warzones, and child and early forced marriage, to girls' access to education – the latter theme brought to life by the participation of young women from **Zambia** whom education had launched on new careers (in one case making documentary films about domestic violence). The occasion was an example of the Commonwealth at its best, forging links between member governments and civil society to tackle difficult issues of human rights and economic development.

Last year also saw continued human rights contributions from the Commonwealth Foundation (CF) and Commonwealth accredited organisations. The UK provided over £1 million to the CF, which continued to encourage and create opportunities for civil society and governments to interact. In 2014, the CF supported programmes to strengthen the capacity of people affected by post-election violence to engage in national dialogues on justice and reparations; to reform mental health legislation in selected Commonwealth countries; and to forge civil society action against child domestic labour. A number of other organisations – the Royal Commonwealth Society, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association, and the Commonwealth Journalists Association – continued to highlight the importance of human rights issues, including the elimination of early, child and forced marriage, the right to information, freedom of expression, and the importance of the independence of the judiciary and rule of law.

In 2015, the UK will continue to encourage the secretariat and **Malta**, as the next hosts of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM) in November, to ensure that human rights feature on the agenda. Working with NGOs and through our high commissions we will continue to promote tolerance and non-discrimination against LGBT&T persons, and to address discriminatory laws, in particular those countries that criminalise homosexuality. We will also explore ways in which the Commonwealth can help address the global challenge faced by human trafficking and modern slavery.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The British government values the OSCE as a forum for political discussion and action on wider European security and foreign policy issues, including the protection and promotion of human rights across the OSCE area. The UK strongly supports the work of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), particularly its election observation activities, and that of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) and the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). We are also committed to safeguarding, and enhancing, the vital role that civil society plays in holding OSCE-participating states to account on human rights through the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (Europe's largest human rights conference).

The OSCE's work in 2014 was dominated by the crisis in and around **Ukraine**. ODIHR undertook its largest ever election

observation mission for the May presidential elections and fielded a large observation mission for the October parliamentary elections. Both were conducted in a challenging security environment. ODIHR's analysis was professional and impartial, consistent with its reputation as the international standard setter in election observation. The UK helped to ensure that elections in Ukraine largely met international standards, providing 100 UK observers to the OSCE/ODHIR Election Observation Mission to the presidential elections on 25 May, and 68 UK observers to the parliamentary elections on 26 October. In March, ODIHR and the HCNM undertook a joint Human Rights Assessment Mission to Ukraine, including Crimea. Their independent, impartial and non-political analysis was helpful in countering **Russian** propaganda and misinformation. The RFOM has also played a valuable role, including by regularly calling attention to violations of freedom of expression, and by seeking to build confidence between Ukrainian and Russian journalists.

The OSCE Ministerial Council met in Basel in December under the chairmanship of **Switzerland**. The UK was pleased to join consensus on a ministerial decision on preventing and combating violence against women, which included language on our priority of preventing sexual violence in conflict. The UK also welcomed a ministerial declaration on enhancing efforts to combat antisemitism. This declaration followed a high-level conference held in November, in Berlin, to mark the 10th Anniversary of the OSCE's Berlin Conference on Antisemitism. A large UK delegation attended the conference, led by the Department for Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Penny Mordaunt.

Disappointingly, participating states were unable to achieve consensus in Basel on a ministerial decision on torture prevention, nor on a ministerial declaration on the role of civil society in the work of the OSCE. But the UK used every appropriate OSCE meeting throughout the year to meet representatives of independent civil society, in order to demonstrate our support for the important contribution that they make to the promotion and protection of human rights. For example, the FCO Minister for Europe, David Lidington, held a meeting with **Russian** NGOs in the margins of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel, during which he heard about the worsening environment for civil society in Russia, and the challenges they faced.

Also in Basel, the UK joined other EU member states, as well as 15 other co-sponsors, in tabling draft ministerial decisions on freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Although these initiatives did not achieve consensus, they attracted much support. As the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms is being restricted in some OSCE participating states, these drafts were an attempt to reaffirm and strengthen our common commitments to enable better implementation.

In a busy year for elections in the OSCE region, we also provided UK observers to join OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions in **Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova** and **Uzbekistan**, in addition to those for **Ukraine**.

The UK was pleased to receive a visit in October by the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM), Dunja Mijatovic. Ms Mijatovic met Baroness Anelay, held discussions with government officials on freedom of the media in the UK, and addressed FCO staff. We welcome this engagement with the OSCE's institutions, and fully accept that the UK's human rights record should also be open to scrutiny.

Looking ahead, **Serbia** will assume the OSCE Chair in January 2015. We will be encouraging the Serbian chair to recognise the level of support for the 2014 initiatives on freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and to take forward further work in these areas. The impending publication of ODIHR guidelines on freedom of association will be a valuable addition to the OSCE's work in this area. More broadly, we will work with partners to ensure that the OSCE continues to hold events that address the key human rights challenges in the OSCE area.

Council of Europe (CoE)

The CoE is a unique intergovernmental organisation working to set common standards on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, and to encourage their implementation across its 47 member states. It has led to the development of over 200 conventions on topics ranging from terrorism to domestic violence. The CoE is also responsible for the most developed regional system of human rights protection worldwide, founded on the ECHR and the European Court of Human Rights, to which everyone within the jurisdiction of its member states has access.

The UK uses its membership of the council to advance its human rights objectives in Europe and beyond. It engages with other member states and with the CoE institutionally to encourage a higher level of ambition and implementation of standards on human rights, democracy and rule of law in member states, and to raise concerns.

Institutional figures

In 2014, Thorbjørn Jagland was elected to an unprecedented second term as CoE Secretary General until 2019, with the UK's support. During 2014, he led CoE efforts to resolve the crisis in **Ukraine**, conducting shuttle diplomacy between Moscow and Kiev, and drawing attention to the dire humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine.

He also highlighted political, constitutional and human rights situations of concern in various member states, notably **Russia, Azerbaijan** and **Turkey**. In addition, he spoke out on issues including corruption, human trafficking, racism, discrimination, antisemitism, violence against women, and LGBT rights. His annual report on the "State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe" was adopted in May, and led to the creation of an internet-based platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists.

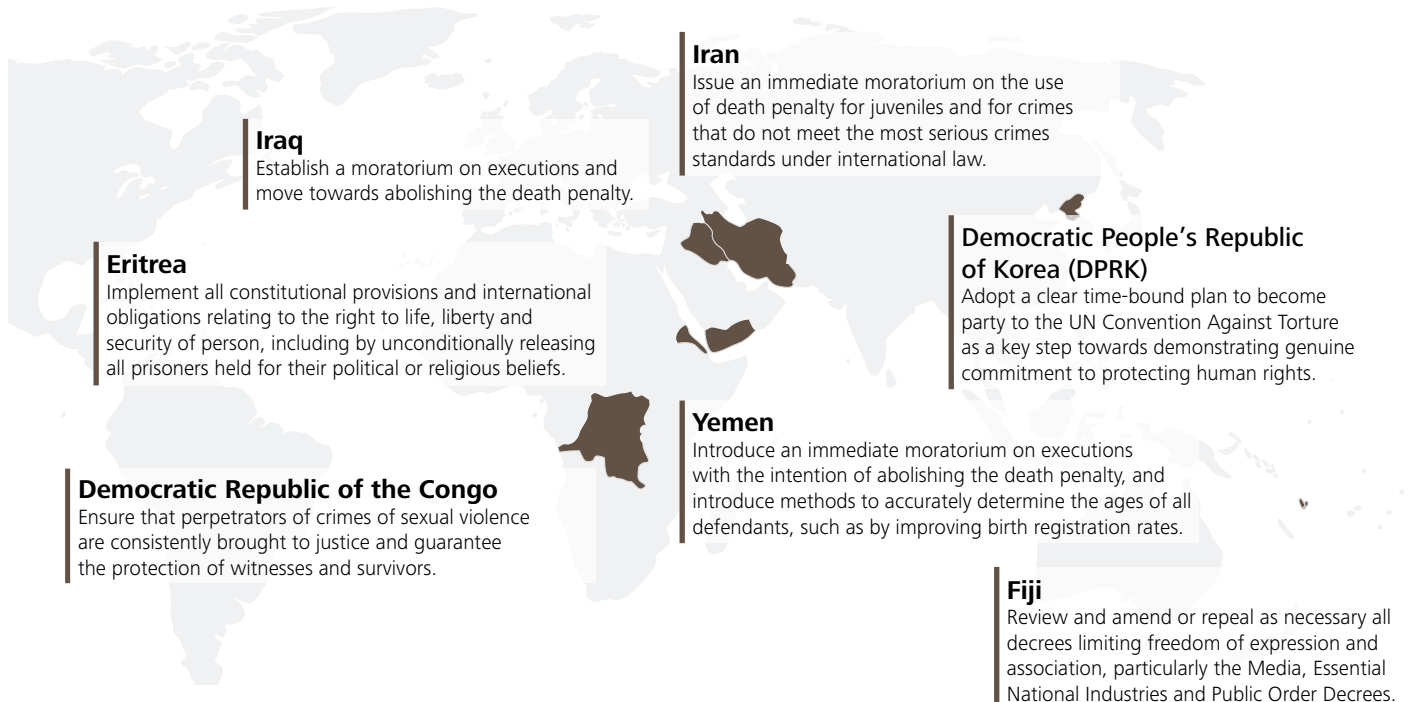
The Venice Commission (the CoE advisory body on constitutional matters), supported the Secretary-General in providing expert legal advice to member states, for instance on the legality of the referendum in Crimea. The CoE

United Nations Universal Periodic Review 2014

Countries reviewed

Highlighting indicates FCO 2014 countries of human rights concern, with examples of UK recommendations given below.

Afghanistan	Cambodia	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Eritrea	Kazakhstan	San Marino
Albania	Chile	Dominica	Ethiopia	Macedonia	Slovakia
Angola	Comoros	Dominican Republic	Fiji	Madagascar	Slovenia
Bhutan	Costa Rica	Egypt	The Gambia	New Zealand	Uruguay
Bolivia	Côte d'Ivoire	El Salvador	Islamic Republic of Iran	Nicaragua	Vanuatu
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Cyprus	Equatorial Guinea	Iraq	Norway	Vietnam
Brunei	Democratic People's Republic of Korea		Italy	Portugal	Yemen
				Qatar	



Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, continued to encourage member states to fulfil their responsibilities under the ECHR and, as part of this, made visits to **Hungary, Azerbaijan, Russia** and **Ukraine**. He also published a report on missing persons in Europe and made interventions on freedom of expression and media freedom; safeguarding human rights in the fight against terrorism; the human rights of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers; and gender equality.

European Court of Human Rights

In 2014, the court dealt with a large number of applications alleging violations of the rights set out in the ECHR. The court's annual report was published in January and reveals it has made significant progress in tackling its backlog of applications, which stood at 69,600 at the end of 2014. This compares with the position at the end of 2012 when there were 128,100 applications pending before the court.

In 2014, the court decided 1,984 applications lodged against the UK. It declared inadmissible or struck out 1,970 applications, and produced judgments in 14 UK cases, finding a violation in four. Equivalent figures for the whole of 2013 were 1,646 decided UK cases, 1,633 of which were declared

inadmissible or struck out. 13 judgements were issued, with five finding a violation of the ECHR.

Under the Convention system, the Committee of Ministers oversees the implementation of judgments finding a violation. At the end of 2014, 11 judgments/groups of judgments finding a violation against the UK remained under supervision by the Committee of Ministers.

The government takes its international obligations very seriously. It has an excellent track record of implementing the measures necessary to address violations found in judgments. In the Hirst (prisoner voting rights) case, the government concluded that there was not a realistic prospect of the UK Parliament adopting the necessary legislative amendments in 2014. In light of this, the Committee of Ministers of the CoE agreed to postpone its supervision of this case until September 2015.

In 2014, the UK focused on continued implementation of the Brighton Declaration, a package of reforms to both the court and ECHR. The declaration was agreed during the UK's CoE chairmanship in 2012, and was designed to reduce the court's backlog of outstanding cases and enhance its efficiency. Protocol 15 to the ECHR – which stresses states'

primary responsibility to secure the rights in the convention and their margin of appreciation in doing so – was laid before the UK Parliament in late 2014, and ratification is expected to be completed in 2015. All 47 State Parties to the ECHR must ratify Protocol 15 before it comes into force. Protocol 16 to the ECHR, adopted in July 2013, is an optional mechanism by which the highest courts of the State Parties can seek advisory opinions on the interpretation of the ECHR from the Strasbourg Court. The UK will evaluate how it works in practice before deciding whether to become party to it. Meanwhile, new rules which introduce stricter conditions for bringing an application to the court came into force on 1 January 2014.

Committee of Ministers (CoM)

The CoM, comprising the governments of member states, is the CoE's principal decision-making body. It plays an important role in holding member states to account on human rights and supervising the implementation of European Court of Human Rights judgments.

The CoM is responsible for supervising member states' execution of some 11,000 judgments of the court. During 2014, its focus included cases involving journalists' freedom of expression in **Azerbaijan**; rights to stand for election in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**; enforced disappearances in Chechnya; the operation of Latin-script schools in Transdniestria; protestors for LGBT rights in **Russia**;

abductions and illegal transfers from Russia to some Central Asian states; and the inter-state **Cyprus v Turkey** case. Supervision of a significant number of UK cases was closed, thereby reducing the number of leading cases under supervision to its lowest ever – 11, lower than most other states.

Ukraine was the main country focus in 2014. Throughout the crisis the CoM held frequent discussions and issued decisions supporting human rights monitoring, as well as the work of the International Advisory Panel in investigating violent incidents in Ukraine from November 2013. It also delivered broader political messages in support of ceasefires, dialogue, reform and implementation of the Minsk Protocols and the plight of the Crimean Tatars.

Thematic areas of debate included freedoms for NGOs and HRDs, and freedom of expression on the internet – with the CoE's guide "Human Rights for Internet Users" published in April. The CoM repeated condemnations of, and adopted declarations on, executions carried out in the **United States**, **Japan** and **Belarus**.

UK priorities

Away from the execution of the court's judgments, the UK expressed concern about the deteriorating human rights and rule of law situation in **Russia**, and welcomed the Secretary-General's engagement there; repeatedly expressed concern

Country Case Study: Crimea and Separatist-Occupied Areas of Ukraine

In his recent New Year address to the nation, Ukraine's President, Petro Poroshenko, described 2014 as "the most difficult [year] in the last seven decades since 1945". Political turmoil in Ukraine followed former President Yanukovich's decision to suspend an Association Agreement with the EU in 2013. He fled Ukraine in February 2014, and **Russia** subsequently illegally annexed Crimea and fomented violent unrest in parts of eastern Ukraine (invaded and now in the control of separatists). This has resulted in the displacement of more than 1.2 million people, and at least 4,800 deaths. There was a significant deterioration in the human rights situation in these regions throughout 2014.

Following the illegal annexation of Crimea by **Russia** in March, permanent residents with Ukrainian citizenship were required to undergo a process of "declaring intent to maintain Ukrainian citizenship" by 18 April, after which all Ukrainian passport holders residing in Crimea were deemed Russian citizens. Those who refused Russian citizenship were considered foreign migrants with reduced rights. Anyone with Ukrainian loyalist sentiments, such as civil society leaders, routinely had their properties searched, or faced other harassment. Prominent leaders in the Crimean Tatar community were specifically targeted through arrests, restricted gatherings, raids on parliament, or simply banned from the peninsula. At least 18 have disappeared. The FCO Minister for Europe, David Lidington, expressed UK concerns in discussions with the leader of the Crimean Tatars, Mustafa Dzhemilev, on 4 December. He reaffirmed the UK's solidarity with the people of Crimea, and our rejection of Russia's illegal annexation.

The international community called for prompt, effective and adequate investigations into all cases of serious human rights

abuses in Crimea. They also called for greater access to the peninsula for international human rights monitoring organisations such as the OSCE.

In separatist-controlled areas of east Ukraine, international organisations closely monitored the human rights situation during 2014. The OHCHR has produced objective monthly reports since March, when a Human Rights Monitoring Mission (HRMMU) was deployed to Ukraine. The final report of 2014 (15 December) set out clearly the total breakdown in law and order in separatist-controlled areas, and how dire the situation was for the populations in these areas; they experienced an increase in killings, torture, abduction for ransom and forced labour, and the regular indiscriminate shelling of built-up areas.

Cases of arbitrary detention and torture were reported on both sides. Other organisations expressed concern at the actions of Ukrainian volunteer battalions, which have been involved in alleged violations, including abductions, unlawful detention and ill-treatment. It is essential that independent investigations take place into all serious allegations of violations or abuses, whether by the Ukrainian military, the Ukrainian volunteer battalions, or the separatists.

The UK has strongly supported international efforts to monitor the human rights situation in these regions. We co-sponsored a resolution at the HRC in June focused on technical assistance for human rights in Ukraine. The resolution called for the protection of human rights in Crimea, and strongly condemned abuses by illegal armed groups.

about the clampdown in **Azerbaijan**, making multiple interventions; and expressed concern about the relationships between Moscow and the breakaway regions in **Georgia**, and the potential impact on human rights there. The UK promoted **Kosovo's** membership to the Venice Commission and its ability to make use of CoE mechanisms to meet CoE standards; and supported the CoE's work on Roma, LGBT issues, the rights of the child, the fight against violence against women, and the No Hate Speech campaign.

The UK signed and ratified the 3rd and 4th Additional Protocols to the European Convention on Extradition; and signed (but has not yet ratified) the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism. The UK gave notification of the Territorial Extension to the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (as amended by the 2010 Protocol) with respect to Bermuda, Bailiwick of Jersey, Gibraltar and Bailiwick of Guernsey. The UK participated in the drafting of the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions which opened for signature in September.

In 2015 the UK will continue to use the CoE to further our human rights priorities in key countries, and to support its work to find lasting political solutions and support reform and institutional strengthening in **Ukraine**, while holding all member states to account for their actions. We look forward to working with Secretary General Jagland and the Belgian and Bosnian chairmanships, and to supporting the Belgian Chairmanship's Brussels conference in March on supervision of the implementation of court judgements.



Overseas Territories flags being flown in Parliament Square to mark Trooping the Colour.

CHAPTER XI: Promoting Human Rights in the Overseas Territories

The UK's Overseas Territories generally have a good record on the protection of human rights. There are 14 British Overseas Territories: Anguilla; Bermuda; the British Antarctic Territory; the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT); the Cayman Islands; the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia in Cyprus (SBAs); the Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands (commonly known as the Pitcairn Islands); St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI); the Turks and Caicos Islands; and the Virgin Islands (commonly known as the British Virgin Islands).

We report here on the status of human rights in the Overseas Territories (except for the British Antarctic Territory; BIOT, SGSSI or the SBAs, as we are focusing our efforts to promote human rights in those territories which have permanent resident populations) because of the UK's special constitutional relationship and responsibilities. The clear UK government policy is that inhabitants of the territories should enjoy the same human rights and protections as inhabitants of mainland Britain. However, the UK government and the governments of the territories are not complacent, and recognise that there are areas for improvement, just as there are in the UK.

Although the Overseas Territories are constitutionally distinct from the UK, they form part of a single "undivided Realm" under Her Majesty The Queen. The UK government has a fundamental responsibility to ensure the security and good governance of the territories and their peoples. These responsibilities flow from international law (including the UN Charter), political commitments, and our wider obligations for British nationals. Each territory has its own written constitution, government and local laws, with substantial devolved powers. The UK acknowledges that the peoples of all the territories have the right of self-determination.

The protection and promotion of human rights are primarily the responsibility of territory governments, although the UK government works with them to ensure they act in accordance with their international human rights obligations. The UK government expects territories which choose to remain British to abide by the same basic standards of human rights as the UK.

The 2012 UK government White Paper, "[The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability](#)", is the foundation on which our strategy of engagement with the territories is based. The annual Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) brings together UK ministers and the

elected territory leaders to drive forward work to realise this vision.

Constitutional and Legal Protection of Human Rights

Human rights chapters have featured in territory constitutions since the 1960s. Territory constitutions now contain new or strengthened human rights chapters that reflect protections in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (the ECHR and the right of individual petition on a permanent basis have been extended to all inhabited territories except Pitcairn).

Most constitutions of the inhabited territories provide for the formal creation of either a human rights commission, ombudsman, or complaints commissioner. In November, the Human Rights Commission Act 2014 was passed by the House of Assembly of the Virgin Islands. Once established, the powers and duties of the Human Rights Commission will include educating the public on the rights and freedoms in Chapter 2 of the Virgin Islands Constitution Order, international human rights conventions, and related human rights activity.

The UK government is responsible under international law for ensuring the compliance of the territories with international human rights obligations, including those contained in conventions that have been extended to them. Territory governments have a duty to ensure local laws comply with relevant international human rights obligations and are non-discriminatory. Where this is not the case, the UK government expects territory governments to take action, including legislating where necessary, in any areas of disparity, in order to reach full compliance.

Progress continued in 2014 across a range of human rights issues. The Virgin Islands passed the Status of Children Act in March, which will ensure that there is no legal differentiation between children born in or out of wedlock. And, in October, the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly unanimously passed the Conditional Release Law, which will bring the territory into line with international standards on sentencing by providing minimum tariffs for life sentences.

Extension of International Human Rights Conventions

It is the UK government's longstanding policy to encourage territory governments to request the extension of UN human rights conventions that the UK has ratified, but to extend these

Name	Flag	Capital	Population (<i>est.</i>)	Extended	Outstanding 2012 White Paper target
Anguilla		The Valley	16,318 (2010)	ICERD • CAT • CRC	ICCPR • ICESCR • CEDAW (<i>requested 2014*</i>)
Bermuda		Hamilton	61,777 (2014)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT • CRC	CEDAW (<i>requested 2013*</i>)
British Antarctic Territory		Rothera	-	N/A	N/A
British Indian Ocean Territory		Diego Garcia	-	N/A	N/A
Cayman Islands		George Town	56,700 (2012)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT • CRC	CEDAW (<i>requested 2013*</i>)
Falkland Islands		Stanley	2,932 (2012 Census)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CEDAW • CAT • CRC	Ambition met
Gibraltar		Gibraltar	29,441 (2010)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT	CEDAW (<i>requested 2013*</i>) • CRC
Montserrat		Little Bay (planned)	4,922 (2011)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT • CRC	CEDAW
Pitcairn, Henderson Ducie and Oeno (<i>Commonly known as the Pitcairn Islands</i>)		Adamstown	36 (2014)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT • CRC	CEDAW
South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands		King Edward Point	-	N/A	N/A
Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia		Episkopi Cantonment	9,700 (2011) <i>Cypriot nationals. Separately 5,800 temporary based UK Defence personnel and families.</i>	N/A	N/A
St Helena		Jamestown	4000 (2009/2010)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT • CRC	CEDAW
Ascension Island (<i>part of the territory grouping that includes St Helena and Tristan da Cunha</i>)		Georgetown	859** (2014)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT • CRC	CEDAW
Tristan da Cunha (<i>part of the territory grouping that includes St Helena and Ascension Island</i>)		Edinburgh of the Seven Seas	267 (2014)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CAT • CRC	CEDAW
Virgin Islands (<i>Commonly known as the British Virgin Islands</i>)		Road Town	28,054 (2010)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CEDAW • CAT • CRC	Ambition met
Turks and Caicos Islands		Cockburn Town	36,600 (2008 est.)	ICERD • ICCPR • ICESCR • CEDAW • CAT • CRC	Ambition met

Acronyms

CAT Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child

ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICERD International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

ICESCR International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**These requests are being considered by the UK Government ** There is no indigenous population and no right of abode on Ascension Island.*

to the territories only when they are ready to implement them. Most of the Overseas Territories are small islands or island groups that face resource and capacity constraints, which can affect their ability to consider or implement treaties. Where this has been identified, the UK government will provide support to those territories which require it.

To date, most of the populated Overseas Territories have had the majority of the “core” UN human rights conventions extended to them as listed in the 2012 White Paper:

- > International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),
- > International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),
- > Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD),
- > Convention against Torture (CAT),
- > Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),
- > Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The Virgin Islands, Falkland Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands have had all six extended to them.

At the JMC in December, UK and territory governments reaffirmed their commitment to work together to extend the core UN human rights conventions to those territories where these had not been extended already. Whilst no new human rights conventions were extended to any territory in 2014, there were a number of positive developments.

In March, the government of Anguilla requested the extension of the CEDAW to the territory. This followed the submission of similar requests by the governments of Bermuda, Gibraltar and the Cayman Islands to the UK government in 2013. The

extension of CEDAW to the populated territories is a key priority for the UK government, which established a project team in June to lead on the scrutiny of these requests, as well as a cross-government group to oversee its progress. Work on the project commenced in August and is being led by the Government Equalities Office (GEO). The project team have also engaged representatives from Montserrat, Pitcairn and St Helena (which include the island territories of Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Island) as they work towards finalising their requests, although it is acknowledged that these smaller territories may require additional levels of support to achieve this goal. The UK remains committed to providing assistance to territories in need, and will explore what further support could be provided.

We are also committed to working with the government of Anguilla to meet its longstanding commitment to seek the extension of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The UK government also renews its encouragement to the government of Gibraltar to request the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in November, and has been extended to all other territories.

The Cayman Islands government published its Disability Policy in October and will work towards pursuing a request for the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities next year. If achieved, the Cayman Islands will be the first territory to have the convention extended to it since the UK ratified the convention and its optional protocol in 2009.

Case study: Promoting reform of children’s rights in the Falkland Islands

The rights of children have been the primary focus of work in the Falkland Islands, which has included the creation of several key roles. For example, a Children’s Champion was appointed in the island’s Legislative Assembly for the first time to ensure that the well-being of children and their families is taken into account in the formulation of government policy. The initiative was supported by the appointment of a specialist child care lawyer by the Attorney General and the permanent appointment of a probation officer on the islands.

The law relating to children was reviewed and updated resulting in a new Children Ordinance with clear duties on the part of the government to provide support and assistance for children in need. The geography of the islands and movement of workers between the Falklands and St Helena, in particular, often results in private arrangements to allow children to attend school in the capital, Stanley. New provisions were introduced under the Ordinance to monitor and safeguard children living away from home under such arrangements. The Falkland Island Safeguarding Children Board was also placed on a statutory footing and has conducted a child sexual abuse awareness campaign and a comprehensive revision of safeguarding procedures. A new protocol for responding to unexpected child deaths was also developed.

The Falkland Islands’ government has also invested in capacity building in order to embed human rights in operations and improve public sector delivery. For example, training has been delivered across agencies to promote effective inter-agency working. Police and prosecuting authorities are also working together to ensure that investigations are robust and that timely prosecutions are brought in relation to suspected offences committed against children.

The Falkland Islands has sought to promote collaboration between the other Overseas Territories to improve child safeguarding practice across the territory network. This includes improving the effectiveness of information-sharing to prevent the movement of offenders across borders and strengthening the ability of the territories to achieve safe recruitment into posts working with children. This initiative was presented by the Falkland Islands at the Attorneys General conference in November.

A child safeguarding expert and police advisor from Lucy Faithfull Foundation will carry out a further independent review in 2015 of progress against the recommendations made in the Child Safety Review funded by the Falkland Islands government and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) in 2013.

Child Safeguarding Initiatives

The UK government takes child safeguarding within the Overseas Territories extremely seriously, and is firmly committed to working with territory governments as well as non-government organisations (NGOs) and experts to help implement strong and effective measures that protect children from harm and promote welfare. Whilst there has been some tangible progress in the last few years, the UK government recognises that further work and investment is needed to achieve the required child safeguarding standards.

In 2014 the UK government took a number of active measures to drive progress:

- > in February, the Department for International Development (DFID) launched its third child safeguarding project in partnership with UNICEF (UN Children's Fund) Caribbean and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation (LFF). The £1.3 million three-year project builds upon earlier work to tackle child safeguarding and help deliver, in accordance with the 2012 JMC commitments, a zero tolerance approach to child abuse;
- > in July, the UK government announced it would establish an independent inquiry to examine a number of serious allegations made in relation to child abuse in St Helena. The Foreign Secretary subsequently announced in November that Ms Sasha Wass QC had been appointed to lead the inquiry. Ms Wass is expected to visit St Helena in March 2015 before reporting later in the year;
- > in September, a dedicated Child Safeguarding and Domestic Violence Policy Officer position was created within the Overseas Territories Directorate of the FCO to encourage compliance with best practice and support the territories in establishing and improving existing child safeguarding measures;
- > in November, the UK Solicitor General chaired the annual Overseas Territory Attorneys General Conference (AGs' conference) at which it was agreed to explore and develop robust child protection measures, including through the completion of comprehensive child protection reviews, where these have not already been undertaken; and
- > in December, UK and territory governments agreed at the JMC to work together to share expertise and improve capacity and, where not already done, territories would consider undertaking child safeguarding reviews.

A number of territories have also undertaken important child safeguarding initiatives in 2014. For example, Child Matters Trust, a **New Zealand** based NGO, visited Pitcairn to deliver further child safeguarding training, as part of continued child safeguarding measures supported by DFID. The Governor for Pitcairn also reiterated the importance of child safeguarding during his inaugural visit in November.

The Virgin Islands completed the National Action Plan for Children, which ensures that the needs of children are addressed in policy making across all sectors of government, and are also reflected across the NGO sector, business and the wider community. UNICEF and LFF were involved in its launch and continue to work with the government of the Virgin Islands. The government also finalised a Child Protection

Protocol, which provides guidelines for government agencies to coordinate actions in child protection, maltreatment reporting, investigation and management.

LFF has also provided support to the safeguarding authorities on St Helena, Montserrat and Pitcairn, which are in receipt of UK budgetary aid. A child safeguarding review was completed in December in Montserrat. The LFF report is expected in 2015 and will complement efforts currently underway to establish a child safeguarding board.

The Ascension Island Safeguarding Children Board is in the process of reviewing and updating its Child Protection policy, including looking at introducing a criminal records check for people working with children.

Looking Ahead to 2015

The UK government will continue work with territory governments to fulfil our joint commitment to extending core UN human rights conventions, where these have not been extended already. However, we recognise that capacity building, public awareness and legislative reform will have to be put in place before some of the territories are in a position to implement these conventions.

We will also seek to explore ways in which we can more effectively promote the sharing of information, expertise and learning across the territories in fulfilment of the commitments made at the AGs' conference and JMC. This approach will not only serve to build sustainable capacity on human rights within the territories, but also improve the practical realisation of human rights.

The UK government will await the outcome of the independent inquiry into child abuse allegations in St Helena, and will carefully consider its conclusions and any recommendations made before aiming to report back to parliament by the end of 2015.

Work on the child safeguarding project will continue apace. The FCO is in the process of establishing a Child Safeguarding Unit within the Overseas Territories Directorate to coordinate child safeguarding work across the territories and improve practices. Its remit will include working with territories to establish a new child safeguarding group to share expertise and improve capacity in child safeguarding. In addition, the unit will take forward recommendations on improving child safeguarding in Montserrat following the LFF visit. Consideration will also be given to undertaking similar reviews in other territories to make achieving zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse a reality.

CHAPTER XII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern

This section contains our review of the human rights situation in 27 countries where the UK government has wide-ranging concerns. For this year's report, we continued to use the criteria for inclusion that we first published in the 2012 Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report:

- > the gravity of the human rights situation in the country, including both the severity of particular abuses and the range of human rights affected;
- > whether a deterioration or improvement in the human rights situation in the country would have a wider impact in the region;
- > whether the human rights situation in the country has an impact on wider UK interests; and
- > whether we are able to influence the human rights situation.

The first of these criteria (gravity of the situation) is the most important assessment that we make, and is not affected by levels of UK interest or influence. In order to ensure that our analysis is strictly evidence-based, we introduced last year a list of internationally respected human rights indicators and indices. Our geographical departments and Embassies and High Commissions overseas assessed all the countries in their regions against these indicators and indices.

Having assessed the gravity of the human rights situation, we applied an analysis of the other criteria, including UK engagement and interests as a means of influencing change, to determine which countries, among all those where there are concerns about the human rights situation, should be the particular focus of Foreign & Commonwealth (FCO) efforts. It is clearly important that we concentrate our resources on those countries where we can make most difference. Ministers then made the final decision on the list of countries of concern and country case studies to be included in this report.

Following the review process, Fiji was removed from the countries of concern category.

Country case studies were introduced in 2012 as a way to report on countries which do not meet the overall threshold for a country of concern, but which we judge nonetheless to be facing human rights challenges, or to be on a trajectory of change with regard to their human rights performance. While most such studies focus on countries with particular human rights challenges or on a negative trajectory, others were included because the analysis showed a positive change, or because we wanted to highlight a particular thematic issue. Some countries are subject to periodic in-year reporting

to enable us to assess human rights trends and monitor developments.

This year, our country case studies are Bahrain, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Egypt, Burundi, The Gambia, and Honduras. Following the events of 2014, we have also decided to treat the Crimea and separatist occupied areas of Ukraine as a country case study. We have also included a number of thematic case studies in relevant chapters of the report, for example, on freedom of religion or belief in South East Asia and political participation in Swaziland.

The list of 27 countries of concern (and country case studies showing a negative trajectory) does not represent an exhaustive list of countries where the UK believes improvements are needed on human rights. Although the countries on which we report here will remain our priorities for 2015, we continue to engage with many other countries on human rights issues, for example through dialogue and project work.

As in last year's report, we have listed the countries of concern in alphabetical order. We have ensured that each entry contains sections to reflect our priority thematic issues such as: elections, freedom of expression, torture prevention, women's rights and freedom of religion or belief. Other sub-headings are included where relevant.

We will continue to report on developments in the countries of concern online on a quarterly basis and raise our concerns about human rights issues wherever and whenever they occur. Any human rights events that have occurred in these countries since the cut-off point for this report (31 December 2014) will be covered in the next quarterly updates, due to be published in April 2015.

Afghanistan

2014 was a significant year, marked by the first constitutional peaceful transfer of power in Afghanistan's history. The elections began with the first round of voting on 5 April, and culminated on 29 September with the inauguration of President Ashraf Ghani; the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG); and the creation of a new Chief Executive role taken up by Ghani's electoral opponent, Dr Abdullah Abdullah.

President Ghani and the NUG have asserted their commitment to tackling human rights violations, and supporting women's rights. The London Conference on Afghanistan, held 3-4 December, provided a platform for the NUG to set out their vision. Human rights were featured in the conference's communiqué and the NUG's reform paper entitled "Realizing Self Reliance: Commitments to Reform and Renewed Partnerships", which highlighted a renewed commitment to strengthen measures to protect women against violence through the implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law; the development of a comprehensive database reporting cases in coordination with human rights and justice institutions; the development of a National Economic Empowerment Plan for women; and a commitment to promote human rights in the justice and security sectors by professionalising the court system and justice processes. The challenge in 2015 will be the implementation of these ambitious reforms.

There is an increased will from the Afghan government to tackle human rights injustices in Afghanistan, though the impact of decades of conflict and the challenges around building effective capacity and security remain. These will continue to be exacerbated by deep divisions in society and strongly held conservative values that slow up progress on women's rights, minority rights, religious freedom, and freedom of expression. Building Afghan capacity within government and civil society, and addressing the institutional challenges will require long-term sustained commitment from the UK and the international community.

The Afghanistan Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) took place in January 2014. The Afghan government acted on both recommendations made by the UK: to repeal article 398 of the Penal Code, which gave perpetrators of so-called honour killings legal concessions; and for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) to be given the independence and legal authority to hold perpetrators of detainee mistreatment to account.

Elections

On 5 April, 6.6 million Afghans, including 2.4 million women, went to the polls to elect a new president, as well as their provincial council representatives, in the first of two rounds of voting. Holding elections in the difficult circumstances faced by Afghanistan is a significant achievement that should not be underestimated.

The presidential election took place over two rounds with the two leading candidates, Dr Abdullah Abdullah and Dr Ashraf Ghani, contesting the second round on 14 June.

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced the preliminary results on 7 July, indicating that Ghani was on course to win. However, citing large-scale fraud and insufficient action from the IEC, Dr Abdullah challenged the preliminary results, which led to an impasse between the two candidates and an agreement for an unprecedented 100% audit of the votes. The UK supported this process, and provided observers as part of the EU Election Assessment Team. The audit ran from 17 July to 14 September. On 21 September a decision was reached to form a government of national unity with Ghani announced as the winner, and Abdullah taking on the newly created role as Chief Executive. A constitutional, peaceful transfer of power from President Karzai to President Ghani was a historic accomplishment for the country.

The NUG, under their political agreement on 21 September, committed to setting up a special electoral commission, with the objective of implementing reform in advance of parliamentary elections. This was reiterated at the London Conference and the UK remains committed to supporting electoral reform.

The UK was one of the leading donors to the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) ELECT II programme, having committed £20 million to help Afghan authorities prepare for the 2014-15 electoral cycle, building the capacity of the electoral management bodies (IEC, Independent Election Complaints Commission and Media Commission) and support technical preparations. We also contributed funds to the Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), the leading domestic observation non-governmental organisation (NGO), which provided civic education, including on the rights of female voters. In addition, the UK funded an early warning system on security obstacles to female voters with the Research Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

We also committed £4.5 million through The Asia Foundation to support women's participation in the Provincial Council elections and next year's parliamentary elections. Almost 300 of the 308 women candidates received training, and a total of 97 women were elected from 458 seats (21%). 18 of those women were elected to the council without using the quota (i.e. through popular vote) and a woman Provincial Councillor from Daikundi, elected as a member of the Meshrano Jirga (upper house), attributed her success, in part, to this training.

We are providing a further £7.5 million to help to strengthen political institutions and processes from the start of financial year 2014-15, including providing training to women Provincial Councillors once they have been elected, in areas including negotiation and leadership, as well as constituency outreach.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

The principles of free speech and free media are enshrined in the Afghan constitution under Article 34 and under the Mass Media Law legislation. However, journalists continue to face violence and restrictions. The NUG has taken early action in this area: in December, President Ghani signed the Access to Information Law, which allows Afghan citizens the right of access to information from the government and non-government institutions, and aims to ensure transparency and accountability in their conduct.

We raised our concerns for Afghan journalists during Afghanistan's UPR and our Embassy in Kabul continues to work closely with media contacts. We funded the Afghan Journalist Safety Committee, and will continue to stress the importance of upholding freedom of the press and media.

Human Rights Defenders

Afghanistan continues to be a hazardous operating environment for human rights defenders (HRDs), who face difficult and dangerous challenges in many parts of the country where legal protection and constitutional privileges have limited effect. We recognise in particular the courageous and dedicated efforts of those across Afghanistan who are working to defend the rights and fundamental freedoms of others, and to build a successful Afghan state. We raised our concerns regarding the safety of HRDs at Afghanistan's UPR in January, and again in June. We will continue to encourage the NUG to ensure the protection of those working to defend the rights of others.

We played a significant part in the EU's recent decision to increase support to HRDs, including plans to refresh their 2010 HRDs Strategy, and ensured that the protection of HRDs was included in the EU+ (i.e. EU plus member states) 2014-2016 Country Strategy for Afghanistan, published on 23 June. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) also lobbied the EU to encourage governments to make specific commitments to protect HRDs, which resulted in a specific commitment on support to HRDs in the 2014 EU+ Local Strategy for HRDs in Afghanistan. We will continue to work with the EU and other member states to coordinate efforts, ensuring that this political commitment is put in to practice, and following up on our allocated responsibilities as part of the implementation. We will continue to support HRDs by: supporting and contributing to a range of protection measures; communicating and networking effectively; working closely with the UN and EU; and building capacity through the Afghan government and civil society, including the AIHRC. Further detail on our work and commitment to support HRDs can be found in the Human Rights Defenders Afghanistan Case Study in Chapter I.

We again provided £500,000 in 2014 to the AIHRC to support its work to promote and protect human rights, including supporting women's rights and HRDs. Our Embassy maintains a regular dialogue with the AIHRC and other leading human rights and civil society organisations, offering support, sharing views and building understanding.

We also sponsored an event for Human Rights Week, focusing on HRDs and protection measures. At the event our Ambassador urged the Afghan government to do more to protect HRDs.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

2014 saw a number of positive developments in the areas of rule of law and justice reform, despite the attention of Afghan institutions being diverted from reform efforts towards election security in advance of the first round of the Presidential elections in April and the second round in June. This comes against the backdrop of a fragile security situation, and significant challenges, notably increasing accountability

in government institutions, ending discrimination of women and religious minorities in the justice system, and tackling the prevalence of corruption. Specific progress can be seen in reform of the justice sector, the promotion of Afghan National Police (ANP) female personnel, and institutional reform of the Ministry of Interior (MoI). In the justice sector, a key milestone was reached by the government with the ratification of the new Afghan Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) and improvements of its content. We are also providing training to counter-terrorism prosecutors and judges in the operation of the new CPC. We will continue to support the Afghan government in ensuring the full implementation of the law.

In line with the newly endorsed National Police Strategy (2014-18) and National Police Plan (2014-15), the Afghan government and the international community work to promote human rights, including women's rights. During 2014, the Afghan senior leadership publicly recognised the need to address these issues: for example, introducing a number of policies to aid the recruitment and improved working conditions of female police officers, though implementation on the ground remains slow. The signing of the "Strategy for the Management of the Affairs of ANP Female Personnel" in early 2014 is a significant step forward, and its implementation is supported by the EU Police Mission (EUPOL) and the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Though societal acceptance of women in the police may be increasing, cultural resistance to female authority continues to be prevalent in some parts of the country. In October, just over 2,100 women were serving in the ANP, significantly fewer than the Afghan government's target of 5,000.

In the first months of the new Afghan government, President Ghani committed to addressing corruption as a priority. Through EUPOL, anti-corruption is included in mentoring plans and training curricula, and is an integral part of "train the trainer" courses. Progress on cooperation and coordination between representatives of the Attorney General's Office, Inspector General's Office, and the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption in fighting corruption within the scope of their mandate, has been varied in different provinces. President Ghani committed to addressing the US\$1 billion Kabul Bank fraud case, and ordered an investigation. Following this investigation, the key perpetrators received ten-year sentences; however, asset recovery remains a challenge.

Death Penalty

Afghanistan retains the death penalty and the UK strongly opposes its use in all circumstances. We called for the abolition of the death penalty at Afghanistan's UPR last year. Most recently, President Ghani has committed to review 400 outstanding death penalty cases. We welcome this review and will continue strongly to condemn any future use of the death penalty.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

The UK takes all allegations of torture very seriously, including mistreatment of detainees. We will not transfer detainees to the Afghan authorities where we judge there is a real risk of serious mistreatment or torture. We no longer conduct detention operations in Afghanistan, except in immediate

Force Protection Conditions. Until June, we transferred UK-captured detainees to the US-mentored Afghan National Detention Facility at Parwan, where the standards of treatment are high. The detention facility is operated and controlled by the Afghans, with the US providing logistical and mentoring support. The UK transferred its last detainee to the Afghan authorities in June.

The Rule of Law Team at the Embassy in Kabul includes staff seconded from HM Prison Service and the Metropolitan Police, and formerly the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) (now closed) in Helmand. The team worked closely with the National Directorate of Security and others, both in Kabul and Helmand. The UK provided training for the Afghan authorities throughout the criminal justice system, including investigation, detention, prosecution and judge-related activity, including on human rights. Through the Embassy and the PRT in Lashkar Gah, we provided mentoring support to the senior leadership of Afghan authorities involved in detention and investigation activity. We will continue to support the NUG's efforts to tackle mistreatment and abuse, and implement processes that reduce the likelihood of detainee abuse.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

UNAMA reported 1,564 civilian deaths in the first six months of 2014, an increase from 1,319 during the same period in 2013. Insurgents were responsible for 77% of the killings. Members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) took stringent measures to ensure the protection of civilians. Following the conclusion of ISAF, the Resolute Support Mission will continue to work with the Afghan government to ensure the most effective measures possible are in place to protect civilians.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Article 2 of the Afghan constitution allows citizens the right to follow their own religion. However, religious minorities face violence and discrimination. We raised our concerns with the Afghan government during Afghanistan's UPR last year.

We carried out a variety of activities within Afghanistan to promote freedom of religion or belief, including supporting human rights awareness training. We also engaged with religious leaders and scholars, both at a central and provincial level, and have attended peace Shuras to discuss the role of religious leaders in promoting peace and tolerance at a local level.

We will continue to support the implementation of international human rights obligations, to support individuals who face persecution on the basis of religious belief, and to condemn instances of violence and discrimination against individuals and groups on the basis of their religion.

Women's Rights

The NUG committed to ensure the protection and progression of women's rights with both President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah making public statements in support of women's rights issues, and pledging the preparation of a National Economic Empowerment Plan for women. We welcome this renewed commitment, and have

made clear to the Afghan government that the historic gains made on women's rights must not be lost. In June, we funded the Afghan delegation to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Embassy hosted an event with the Ministry of Interior, Police, Army, ISAF, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and NGOs to look at barriers to women accessing justice.

Men and women have equal rights under the Afghan constitution. However, Afghanistan remains a deeply conservative country. Life for many Afghan women is controlled under a strictly patriarchal society resulting in restricted freedom of movement, and limited access to healthcare services, justice and the workplace. Substantial improvements to the situation for women are likely to be achieved over a long time period, and progress is likely to come in small steps.

The Department for International Development (DFID) is contributing £3 million to a joint UK and Australian programme to strengthen access to justice for women affected by violence, and build awareness of women's rights. It aims to reach at least 30,000 women in 12 provinces, and work with men on changing norms around violence. The Tawanmandi programme to strengthen Afghan civil society has supported a larger number of civil society organisations in efforts to eliminate violence against women, including supporting access to legal services and rights; provision of services to survivors of violence; and building awareness on women's rights. In 2014, we also allocated over £300,000 to address the psychological needs of victims of sexual harassment and violence in Afghanistan, and provided £500,000 to the AIHRC to ensure it can act to protect women's rights.

We also supported girls' access to quality education through our contribution to the multi-donor Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), and the £48.4 million Girls' Education Challenge Fund (2013-17), which targets the hardest to reach and poorest girls in marginal areas. The Girls' Education Challenge Fund will reach 180,000 girls; to date, it has enabled over 80,000 girls to enrol in community education across 16 provinces, with over 2,500 community-based and 1,300 government school teachers trained.

Women's and girls' rights featured prominently at the London Conference on 3-4 December. The NUG set out a reform agenda that included and recognised the central role of women and youth. Women's rights issues were incorporated across all of the main themes and events at the conference. This included an associated event, "Ayenda", for civil society, and a session in the main plenary to report back on the key messages that emerged from the Oslo Symposium on Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan on 23 November. FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, attended and spoke at the symposium.

On 11 December, the UK published an implementation plan for the "UK National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security". Afghanistan is one of six priority countries for the National Action Plan. The implementation plan sets out activities we will pursue with a view to measuring progress on targets set out in the National Action Plan.

We will continue to work with the international community and the NUG to ensure that commitments are taken forward at the Senior Officials meeting in spring 2015.

Minority Rights

The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework includes a commitment to protect and promote the human rights of all Afghan people, including minorities, as enshrined in Article 22 of the constitution. We continue to discuss progress against commitments made at the Tokyo Conference, including on human rights, with the Afghan government.

We raised our concerns regarding minority rights with the Afghan government during Afghanistan's UPR earlier this year. President Ghani met representatives from minority groups to discuss their concerns and look at how the NUG can better support them.

Children's Rights

We welcome Afghanistan's progress in this area, and its implementation of an action plan for the UN campaign "Children, Not Soldiers". In particular, we welcome the endorsement by the Afghan Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on children and armed conflict of the roadmap to compliance and legislation to ban the recruitment of children in the Afghan National Security Forces.

However, children continue to face significant challenges, including violence, exploitation, sexual abuse, child labour and early marriage. We raised our concerns regarding the situation for children during Afghanistan's UPR, and will continue to support the work of the AIHRC and the UN on children's rights.

Belarus

The human rights situation in Belarus did not significantly change during 2014. Human rights defenders (HRDs), opposition politicians and journalists are regularly harassed by security services. During the course of the year, three political prisoners were released: two at the end of their sentences, and another early without requiring a request for a pardon. Others remain in jail. Three death sentences were carried out, and there was no move towards a moratorium. There were at least forty preventative arrests in the month leading up to the Ice Hockey World Championships in Minsk in May; these were to prevent human rights activists and other members of civil society from being able to demonstrate in front of an international audience, or to mar the running of the championships. The Belarusian Parliament passed new laws in December, giving the Ministry of Information even greater control over the media.

There were a few positive steps taken by the government of Belarus in 2014. Along with the early release of a political prisoner, they held a workshop to discuss the possibility of establishing a National Human Rights Institute, which included representatives from civil society. However, no further work has been done since the workshop.

In 2014, the UK government maintained pressure on the government of Belarus to improve the standard of human rights in the country and to meet international standards. We focused on pressing for a moratorium on the death penalty and for improved freedom of expression.

The UK and other EU partners agreed to extend the restrictive measures regime for Belarus (which includes an arms embargo, asset freezes, and travel bans) until October 2015. UK ministers and officials continue to engage with human rights organisations and civil society organisations where possible; the UK will continue to provide any support it can to their work.

The Belarusian authorities continued refusing to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, Miklos Harazsti, who presented his report in October to the UN. He has still not been allowed access to Belarus. His report highlighted severe restrictions on civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and HRDs, and the criminalisation of many civil activities. The UK strongly supported a continuation of the Special Rapporteur's mandate in June, and continues to urge the government of Belarus to cooperate with him.

Elections

Local elections were held on 23 March 2014. Opposition parties, human rights organisations, and NGOs reported widespread violations and harassment, both during the campaign and on polling day.

Opposition parties and non-registered organisations reported that pressure was put on their candidates during both registration and campaigning. This resulted in mass withdrawals of potential candidates. Observers and HRDs also reported discrimination during the forming of constituency

commissions, which were dominated by government representatives.

During the election, observers reported numerous breaches, including not being allowed to monitor the vote count, detentions, premature opening of ballot boxes, withdrawals of accreditation, voting without passports, and voting for relatives. In the final count, only a dozen opposition-related candidates were elected to local councils, out of more than 2,000 seats.

With the presidential elections taking place in 2015, it will be important to monitor these elections to determine whether they are free and fair. The authorities in Belarus have agreed to allow international election monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to observe the elections; the UK will take part in this. We will continue to monitor closely the internal human rights situation in the run-up to the elections, as well as any further restrictions on human rights, particularly on freedom of the media and on members of the opposition. Prior to the 2010 elections, there were signs of improving human rights. However, these were reversed on the eve of the elections with a violent crackdown and many arrests. One opposition politician arrested during that time, Mikalai Statkevich, remains in prison.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Freedom of expression and assembly continue to be restricted in Belarus. Laws on mass assembly make it illegal for even a single person to hold a demonstration on their own.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, visited Belarus in 2014. At the end of her visit she called on the government of Belarus to end the practice of accreditation for all people working within the media, which currently leads to these individuals being subjected to monitoring by the authorities.

A new law was approved by the Belarusian government in December 2014, which will come into force on 1 January 2015, requiring all non-web-based media to register with the Ministry of Information. Online media do not have to register; however, the law provides that any online media can be blocked if they publish information deemed unsuitable by the authorities. The definition of "unsuitable" is vague and open to wide interpretation. On 20 December 2014, prior to the law's introduction, there was an indication as to how it would operate. Without warning, the authorities temporarily blocked a number of online media sites to prevent anti-government comment on the currency crisis.

The political pressure on independent journalists and media outlets appears to be increasing. Thirty journalists have been detained since the beginning of 2014. Charges were predominantly for working without accreditation, or for working with foreign media outlets. If convicted, heavy fines are imposed. One journalist was held on suspicion of espionage. Aleksandr Alesin, a military affairs journalist in Belarus, was arrested after he was seen meeting a diplomat based in Minsk. He was finally charged with cooperating with a foreign intelligence agency, and released on bail.

Freedom of expression continues to be restricted and a number of human rights activists and opposition activists have been detained, mostly for trivial activities such as handing out leaflets or displaying the old red and white Belarusian flag.

A practice of handing down shorter sentences may seem more lenient but shorter sentences can be disruptive and can make it difficult for those sentenced to keep a job. Pavel Vinogradov, an opposition activist was arrested 15 times in 2014 and often for preventative measures.

Human Rights Defenders

Elena Tonkacheva, the Russian director of Belarus human rights NGO, LawTrend, was issued with a notice of deportation in November 2014, following her detention for an alleged speeding violation. She has never applied for Belarusian citizenship, but has lived in the country for 30 years. EU missions in Minsk raised this case with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as there are concerns she is being deported to prevent her from continuing to advocate for human rights in Belarus. She has appealed against the deportation.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Former political prisoner and head of human rights organisation, Viasna, Ales Bialiatski, was released from prison in June 2014. He was not required to request a pardon to commute his sentence, but his civil and political rights have not been fully reinstated. The Foreign & Commonwealth Minister for Europe, David Lidington, along with the EU and other individual member states, welcomed the release of Ales Bialiatski. Mr Lidington also called for the unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners still held in Belarus. Two other long-term political prisoners were released in 2014. Both had come to the end of their sentence. Mikolai Autukhovich was released in April, but is still subject to 16 months' preventative surveillance. Eduard Lobau was released in December 2014, but is subject to a further year's preventative surveillance.

The early release of Ales Bialiatski did not signify any amnesty on political prisoners. None of the political prisoners released in 2014 were rehabilitated into society, and some face preventative surveillance and other controls imposed for a prolonged period after they are released. The authorities in Belarus continue to harass the remaining political prisoners who are coming towards the end of their sentences. This includes charging them with new minor offences to extend their sentences, and moving them around prisons to make them more uncomfortable.

In December 2014, the Belarusian Parliament passed a new law which allows plea bargaining in criminal cases. If criminals admit their guilt and cooperate with the authorities, sentences can be commuted. In cases involving the death penalty, such sentences can be commuted to life in prison. This is potentially a positive step, if implemented.

There were at least forty preventative arrests in the month leading up to the Ice Hockey World Championships which took place in Minsk in May 2014. Despite hopes that the event would shine a spotlight on Belarus and help pressure the authorities into improving the human rights situation, it

did the opposite. Activists were detained on supposed minor charges such as swearing in public. Detentions were short, of up to 25 days, but it highlighted the extreme political pressure some NGOs and human rights organisations face. Other vulnerable members of society, including the homeless, were also rounded up and detained for the duration of the championships.

Death Penalty

Belarus continues to use the death penalty. Three sentences were carried out in 2014 and one person remains on death row; he is appealing against the sentence. There has been no improvement in the method of carrying out the sentences: the authorities continue to provide no warning to next of kin and no release of the bodies to the families; some families are not even told where the bodies are buried. Executions are carried out even if a case has been sent before the UN Human Rights Committee. The last execution was carried out in October. The prisoner's mother received a package containing his personal effects prior to her being officially informed by letter that the sentence had been carried out. In previous cases, the authorities have not provided the personal effects to the next of kin after a death sentence has been carried out.

There are no indications that the government of Belarus is considering a moratorium on the death penalty. The UK, along with the EU, continues to call for this, leading eventually to abolition.

LGBT Rights

The British Embassy in Minsk continues to support LGBT people in Belarus, and flew a rainbow flag on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. LGBT people suffered increased harassment from the regime during 2014. The authorities refused permission to hold a parade in Minsk in March, and put pressure on landlords so as to make it impossible to find venues to host any LGBT events.

Burma

2014 was a mixed year for the human rights situation in Burma. We saw some improvements in line with the reform process and democratic transition that began in 2011, including some achieved with UK support. However, other areas witnessed setbacks, which were of significant concern. Positive developments in 2014 included the start of preparations for the elections due in November 2015, which will be an important milestone in Burma's transition to democracy. The EU and Burma held their first Human Rights Dialogue in May, establishing an important forum for dialogue and cooperation. A number of child soldiers were released, and the government of Burma and the UN agreed to extend Burma's action plan to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. There was progress revising a number of outdated laws relating to peaceful protest, association, and media freedoms. EU-sponsored resolutions in the UN, at both the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in March and UN General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee in November (co-sponsored by the UK), welcomed progress in Burma, while stressing the need to address areas of serious concern.

The UK's human rights work in 2014 focused on political freedoms and supporting human rights defenders (HRDs), as well as promoting tolerance and diversity. Following considerable UK lobbying, including directly with the Commander-in-Chief by Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for Asia, Hugo Swire, Burma endorsed the Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. We held further discussions with the Burmese government and military on ending the recruitment of child soldiers, where Burma has seen some progress. The UK remained an important supporter of the peace process, although the hoped-for national ceasefire agreement did not materialise. The mandate for the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma was renewed, with the appointment of Yanghee Lee in July.

Set against this progress were a number of worrying setbacks. 2014 saw increasing numbers of political prisoners, conflict in Kachin and Shan, and repression of the media. The early part of the year saw a sharp increase in inter-communal violence in Rakhine State, and the Rohingya community continues to be subject to discriminatory policies and vulnerable to further violence. Throughout the year, we continued to push the government to find a sustainable solution to the situation in Rakhine, and address inter-communal tensions more broadly.

2015 will be dominated by elections planned for November. Other key events include continuing peace talks, the passage of four controversial draft religious laws through parliament and the release of further data from the 2014 census. Our policy in 2015 will continue to be one of engagement with frank discussions on matters of concern. UK priorities for the year will be to work with international partners to ensure political freedoms and maintain stability, including in Rakhine and Kachin. We will encourage a credible and inclusive election in November that represents the will of the Burmese people. We will increase our direct development assistance to Burma to £82 million in the UK financial year 2015-16, including funding humanitarian assistance where it is most needed.

Elections

The November 2015 elections promise to be a pivotal point in the democratic development of Burma. The elections will create serious challenges, as well as opportunities, for the human rights situation and the wider reform process. These risks include exploitation of anti-Muslim sentiment, or extremist rhetoric for political gain. We want to see inclusive and credible elections, underpinned by freedom of expression and respect for human rights.

The UK remains closely engaged on this issue, and Prime Minister David Cameron raised the elections with President Thein Sein during their meeting in Brisbane at the G20 Summit in November. The UK has allocated around £25 million over five years to strengthen democratic governance in Burma, including support to the elections. The UK also contributes funding for the provision of technical advice to the Burmese election commission, voter education and monitoring, and observation of the electoral process.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Through a project with ARTICLE 19, we supported amendments to outdated legislation that does not adhere to international standards, but progress was mixed. The amended Association Registration Law, for example, saw the welcome removal of harsh penalties for non-registration of local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). But a provision remains for the Registration Committee to evaluate applications from NGOs based on “national security grounds”, which introduces potentially arbitrary criteria for assessing applications. Similarly, the Peaceful Assembly Bill was amended to reduce penalties and remove obligations for demonstrators, but there are concerns it contains ambiguities which could be exploited by authorities. We stressed that the Burmese government need to ensure that human rights are protected. We will continue to work with legislators, ministries, civil society and the media to develop capacity in Burma to ensure that laws respect rights and freedoms and comply with international best practice.

2014 saw the continued emergence of an independent media. Burma was ranked at 145 out of 180 states in the 2014 World Press Freedom Index (up 6 places on its 2013 ranking). But it was also noted by the Committee to Protect Journalists for being the eighth most repressive country for jailing reporters. The government continues to restrict access to northern Rakhine, and has increased restrictions on visas for foreign journalists.

Arrests and intimidation of journalists continued throughout 2014. These included the arrest in April of Democratic Voice of Burma reporter Zaw Pe, and the sentencing in July, of five representatives of a local newspaper, to ten years of hard labour for trespassing in pursuit of a published story, in which they claimed that a military facility was being used to produce chemical weapons. A number of other journalists and activists were subsequently arrested for staging a protest in support of the journalists. In October, the freelance journalist Ko Par Gyi was killed while in military custody in Mon State. We continue to make clear to Burmese authorities that media freedoms must be protected, and our Embassy in Rangoon continues to

raise cases of arrested journalists both bilaterally and through the EU-Burma Human Rights Dialogue.

While the development of media freedom in Burma has been generally positive, we remain concerned over the worrying rise of – predominantly anti-Muslim – hate speech in 2014. We call on the government to ensure that action is taken against those who incite racial and religious hatred and violence.

Human Rights Defenders

Overall, the working environment for HRDs in Burma – while considerably improved over the last few years – remained difficult, especially for those operating outside of the main cities and central provinces in areas of ethnic conflict, and for those speaking out on issues relating to religion. In her first report as UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma, Yanghee Lee noted in September that many observers had seen “the shrinking of that space for civil society and the media.”

2014 started with welcome further releases of political prisoners. However, despite President Thein Sein’s 2013 pledge to release all remaining political prisoners, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) estimates that 164 remained incarcerated at the end of 2014, with a further 203 awaiting trial. While these numbers are lower than under the previous regime (when over 2,000 political prisoners were incarcerated), we remain clear that the commitment to release all such prisoners must be met. We remain concerned by the number of arbitrary arrests, detentions and trials without due process of Muslims in Rakhine. We are also aware that within the numbers reported, some individuals were re-arrested several times, and the status of some prisoners was disputed. This issue remains a top priority for the UK, and we continue to urge the Burmese authorities to address this, as well as to ensure a mechanism is in place to review current and future cases. As Mr Swire has made clear, “one political prisoner is one too many”.

Access to Justice and Rule of Law

In 2014, we continued our contribution to an EU project to train 4,000 Burmese police officers in community policing and public order best practice, and to help establish international standards across the country. Some encouraging initial signs of success included the effective policing of the July anti-Muslim violence in Mandalay.

We continued to liaise closely with the Parliamentary Rule of Law Committee led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and provide support, including through projects delivered by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law. We also continued to urge the Burmese government to ratify human rights treaties. Following ratification of the Biological Weapons Convention, we continued to discuss how we can best support ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

2014 saw a worrying increase in anti-Muslim sentiment and violence, including that linked to the vocal minority Buddhist nationalist movements. Outside of Rakhine (see the section on Minority Rights below) there was anti-Muslim violence in

Mandalay in July, in which two people died and more than 12 were injured, and further outbreaks in June and September in Magwe Region. We monitored this closely, and continued to fund work to build relationships, understanding and tolerance between religious communities.

Conflict between ethnic armed groups and the Burmese military continued in 2014. The deadliest incident was the shelling on 19 November of a training camp in Kachin, in which 23 members of various ethnic armed groups were killed. We were deeply worried about the ongoing fighting, particularly in Kachin, Shan and Karen States, and the impact this had on the wider peace process. We continue to call for an end to the violence, the resumption of meaningful negotiations towards a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, and a framework for future political dialogue. In 2014, we set up the Peace Support Fund to support local and international organisations working to broaden the peace process and address inter-communal violence. In January, Mr. Swire became the first UK minister since Burma's independence in 1948 to visit Kachin. Minister of State for International Development, Desmond Swayne, became the second when he visited in August. During his visit, Mr Swire raised the UK's concerns at the highest level, including directly with the Burmese Commander in Chief, and Northern Commander.

We were in frequent contact with the UN and local organisations about the humanitarian implications of the fighting. We also continued our programme of humanitarian assistance for 100,000 displaced people in Kachin and northern Shan States. The UK is among the largest bilateral humanitarian donors to Kachin. We also continued to press the government at the highest levels to allow unrestricted humanitarian access to all areas of the country.

Burma endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict on 5 June, and Burma's Deputy Foreign Minister U Thant Kyaw attended the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict from 10-13 June. Despite this welcome step, reports suggested that acts of sexual and gender-based violence continued. In November, the Women's League of Burma issued a report alleging 118 documented incidences of sexual violence committed by the Burmese military, primarily in areas of conflict, since 2010. We encouraged the authorities to demonstrate that they would honour the commitments they endorsed in June. We also funded projects training women in basic legal skills, helping local leaders prevent sexual violence in their local communities, and worked with non-state armed groups to promote adherence to international standards on sexual violence and gender discrimination.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Prejudice and discrimination against Burma's religious minorities was an increasing cause for concern during 2014 with the emergence of religious nationalist groups, and an increase in hate speech. 2014 saw further violence against Muslim communities in several locations across the country (see Conflict and Protection of Civilians, above). We continue to monitor this worrying trend. The UK supported inter-faith work in Burma through projects which built relationships

and understanding, including a project delivered by Christian Solidarity Worldwide to forge exchanges between activists on religious freedom in Burma and Indonesia, and provided training to tackle religious intolerance.

There were tensions over four populist faith-based laws which are currently in draft in front of the Burmese Parliament. These laws cover religious conversion, population control, inter-faith marriage and polygamy and, if enacted, could harm religious tolerance and respect for diversity in Burma, as well as contravene international standards and treaties to which Burma is a signatory. We voiced our strong concerns over this proposed legislation to the Burmese government and parliamentarians.

Women's Rights

The rights of women and girls remained an important part of UK activity in Burma, where women remain severely under-represented in public life. The most recent (2013) UN Gender Inequality Index places Burma 150 out of 187 countries, and less than 6% of parliamentarians are women. In 2014, the UK supported work to: reduce vulnerability, including to sexual violence; increase participation in politics; and include women more effectively in processes and decisions that affect them.

On 12 June, the UK launched our third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), for which Burma is one of six priority countries. The plan outlines our intention to put women and girls at the centre of all efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, to promote peace and stability, and to prevent and respond to violence. On 11 December, we published our first comprehensive three-year WPS [Implementation Plan](#).

Minority Rights

Of all the human rights concerns in Burma in 2014, the situation in Rakhine remained the most worrying. Rohingya Muslims suffered from many restrictions on freedom of assembly, on marriage and children, as well as severe restrictions on freedom of movement, denying or severely restricting access to livelihoods, schools, healthcare, and places of worship. Burma's refusal to recognise Rohingya citizenship claims compounded the denial of the most basic rights.

In January, a police officer and up to 40 Rohingya were reportedly killed in northern Rakhine in renewed inter-communal violence and, in February, the Burmese government ordered Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to cease operations in Rakhine. The situation deteriorated further in March when violence in the state capital, Sittwe, targeted primarily against the offices and residences of international humanitarian aid workers, resulted in the temporary halting of humanitarian programming and the removal of most international staff to ensure their safety. The expulsion of MSF left the provision of healthcare in Rakhine in a perilous state. Despite signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the government in August for a return of its operations, MSF had only been able to re-start operations in December. We continued to make clear to the government that they must ensure services are adequately delivered to all communities in Rakhine.

From April, the Burmese government started to take steps which may help address the long-term problems in Rakhine,

including the appointment of a new Rakhine Chief Minister, the drafting of a Rakhine Action Plan (RAP), and trialling citizenship verification for the Rohingya. A pilot verification exercise began in a camp for internally displaced persons in June with over 1,200 people processed. By the end of 2014, only around 200 of these had had their citizenship status agreed; of these many obtained naturalised citizenship with fewer rights, and a small minority obtained full citizenship. We recognise the need for a transparent, consistent and inclusive citizenship verification exercise for the people of Rakhine, and made it clear to the authorities that this must adhere to international standards. We encouraged the authorities to reach out to both communities to ensure that the process is fully understood by all. The development of the RAP was shared with parts of the international community in 2014. We believe that some parts of the initial draft plan would, if implemented, undermine the prospects for peace and stability across Rakhine. We stressed the need for consultation on the plan with all communities in Rakhine.

We were deeply disappointed that the Burmese government went against its long-standing commitment that all individuals would have the right to self-identify their ethnic origin in the census, to which the UK contributed £10 million. The census was a critical step in Burma's development and would provide much-needed information on where services are most required. In general, observers stated that the enumeration process was successful. However, in Rakhine the option to select Rohingya as an ethnic designation was omitted and replaced by "Bengali". We made clear to the authorities our concern that this decision was in contravention of international standards on census conduct. The UK stands by the right of ethnic minorities to self-identify.

We continued to urge the Burmese authorities to work toward a long-term solution that brings peace and reconciliation, and protects the human rights of all communities within Rakhine. The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors of humanitarian assistance in Rakhine and, since 2012, we have provided £12 million in aid which supports shelter; water sanitation and hygiene programmes; nutrition and protection activities; and non-food items for over 114,000 people. We also support the UN's coordination of the international humanitarian response.

Children's Rights

Burma remains listed by the UN Security Council for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. We welcomed the agreement to extend the 2012 UN action plan in March. Since then, there have been a number of further releases of child soldiers, including 91 in August, 109 in September, and 80 in November. These bring the number of those released within the UN process to more than 500 since 2012. Along with a number of prosecutions of those found to be involved in recruitment, this is welcome progress. However, we note that access to military units and non-state armed groups continues to be restricted and, while recruitment of children has slowed, it has not ceased entirely. More remains to be done with both government forces and non-state armed groups, particularly to end ongoing recruitment and remove incentives to that effect.

Central African Republic

In March 2013, a collection of non-state armed groups called Séléka ousted President Bozizé, taking control of the capital Bangui. Widespread violence towards civilians led self-appointed local militias ("anti-Balakas") to fight back, eventually ousting Sélékas from power in December 2013. This was preceded and followed by widespread attacks on civilians, as well as vicious communal and criminal violence, and by massive population displacement. African Union troops (MISCA) and French troops (Sangaris) deployed in December in an attempt to stabilise the country.

The human rights situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) remained dismal throughout 2014, due to continued violent conflict and widespread abuses against civilians. Principal concerns were the recruitment and use of child soldiers, extrajudicial killings, incitement to ethnic hatred, sexual violence against women and children, deprivation of livelihood, forced displacement, and inter-faith violence. There has been complete impunity for these acts.

The increase in the number of inter-faith reprisal attacks, as noted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), resulted in large-scale exodus of Muslim communities to neighbouring countries and to the north of CAR. It had a huge impact on basic livelihoods, the wider economy, and the economy's ability to recover. Long-term poverty, the absence of functioning state institutions, and a breakdown of law and order increased insecurity and exacerbated religious tensions. The humanitarian situation in 2014 was dire, with violence hampering the operations of UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in the CAR.

Catherine Samba-Panza was elected interim President by the CAR's National Transitional Council in January 2014. She appointed an interim government (reshuffled in August) which was generally felt to be inclusive.

In 2014, the UK worked with fellow members of the International Contact Group for CAR to bring an end to the violence, while at the same time highlighting what was happening and attempting to prevent further abuses. The UK provided diplomatic and financial support to MISCA and provided logistical help for the deployment of French troops.

On 17 March, the EU Foreign Affairs Council authorised the deployment of an EU-led mission (EUFOR CAR), which was mandated to secure the capital city of Bangui for an initial period of six months. The EUFOR CAR operation reached full operational capacity in June, and was extended for a further three months until March 2015. The UK provided logistical and financial support.

In April, the UK co-sponsored a UN Security Council resolution authorising the deployment of a UN Peacekeeping mission (MINUSCA). MINUSCA deployed in September and has a civilian and military dimension, with an initial focus on preventing human rights abuses, improving security, and promoting reconciliation. A senior FCO diplomat, Diane Corner, is currently the Mission's Deputy Special Representative. We supported and encouraged attempts by UN bodies to follow up on reports of human rights abuses. We worked with the UN

to secure an arms embargo and an individual sanctions regime to deter human rights abuse.

July saw the leaders of the rebel groups signing the Brazzaville Agreement for the cessation of hostilities. Despite initial hopes, it did not lead to widespread improvement in the security situation or reconciliation. Fighting continued and crime increased. The rebel groups appear to have splintered into smaller groups which, coupled with increased general banditry, led to continued widespread insecurity. 2014 also saw an increase in the number of attacks against the humanitarian community.

Through its humanitarian aid, the Department for International Development (DFID), the third largest bilateral humanitarian donor to the CAR, supported vulnerable populations and mitigated the impact of forced displacement and deprivation of livelihoods.

The UK welcomed the request from the CAR government for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open a new investigation into serious crimes committed in the CAR since 1 August 2012. On 24 September, the ICC Prosecutor announced her decision to open a second investigation in the CAR with respect to crimes allegedly committed since 2012.

On 26 September, at the UN Human Rights Council, the UK co-sponsored a resolution to extend the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in CAR for another year, in order to assess, verify, and report on human rights abuses and violations, and make recommendations on technical assistance and capacity building.

However, we recognise that these efforts had only limited impact on human rights in the CAR in the course of 2014. Obstacles included ongoing conflict, the poor infrastructure of the country, and the remoteness of many areas. These impeded the work of human rights monitors and the ability of state authorities to enforce respect for human rights.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Throughout 2014 there were many credible reports of torture by all sides in the conflict, including extrajudicial executions and the killing of injured civilians.

The deadly cycle of sectarian violence in central and eastern parts of the country continued. One such example took place in February, and saw attacks against civilians in the town of Sibut by armed Séléka commanders and fighters who had left their bases in Bangui. Civilians were tortured and killed around the town where the former rebels had been re-grouping.

Several mass graves were uncovered in Bangui, including one containing 15 bodies in January. In February a mass grave with at least 13 bodies was discovered under a petrol station in Bangui at a camp formerly occupied by Séléka rebels.

Lack of police facilities and the absence of a functioning judicial system meant that little effective action to halt these abuses and bring the perpetrators to justice was taken. Reports by human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International, found that those suspected of involvement in committing crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations were already suspected of committing such violations

and abuses in the past. They appear to have so far escaped investigation, prosecution or punishment.

The International Contact Group for CAR met in November 2014 in Bangui. Members publicly called for an end to the sectarian violence, and reminded all armed actors that those responsible for human rights abuses should be held to account.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

Civilians continued to suffer enormously in the conflict throughout 2014. There was widespread displacement, and loss of livelihood and means of sustenance, either through the evacuation and destruction of farmland, or the theft of livestock. There were also reports of pillaging and the destruction of property. Acts such as these led to some people dying of hunger and disease in the bush, and is likely to have long-term humanitarian consequences.

It is estimated that more than 2.5 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance at the end of 2014. The latest available figures from the UN High Commission for Refugees indicated that there are 438,538 internally displaced persons (IDPs), and 425,977 CAR refugees living in neighbouring countries.

The UN noted, in their Commission of Inquiry Report, that in early 2014 anti-Balaka groups attacked villages even after the Séléka were no longer present. The intentional targeting of Muslims took place throughout the western and central parts of the CAR. Hundreds of Muslims were killed, and hundreds of thousands were forcibly displaced.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

The UK was concerned that, despite ongoing reconciliation efforts, religious tensions remained high. There has been an exodus of Muslims to the north of the CAR, and the Muslim population in Bangui decreased from 120,000 to around 7,000.

The UK welcomed the work done by religious and non-governmental organisations to reduce the tensions and promote social cohesion at community level. In June, the former FCO Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, met the Bishop of Bossangoa, a member of the CAR's Inter-Religious Forum which advocates religious harmony in the CAR. The Bishop's key message was that the violence should not be seen as a fight between different religions, but rather as the legacy of neglect, poverty, and political exploitation.

Women's Rights

Women and children were particularly affected by the crisis in the CAR. The international community received numerous reports of rape, sexual slavery and early and forced marriage perpetrated by armed actors.

The UK calls for greater action in supporting the victims of sexual violence and bringing perpetrators to justice. Stronger efforts are required to address the precarious situation faced by women and girls in the IDP camps, and to highlight their needs and interests internationally.

At the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June, the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, highlighted the situation in the CAR. In November, the African Union

deployed a team of experts to the CAR to support victims of sexual violence, co-financed by the UK. This deployment is intended to facilitate the rehabilitation of three health facilities, provide protection and assistance to 1,000 victims of sexual violence, and establish a national network of government and community stakeholders that can help prevent and respond to sexual violence.

Children's Rights

More than one million children's lives were at risk in the CAR as aid organisations' access to vulnerable populations was severely impeded because of worsening security and criminality.

Concerns over the use of child soldiers continued. Séléka combatants and, more recently, anti-Balaka, actively recruited children and forced them to commit atrocities.

It is vital that the international peacekeeping forces in the CAR continue their efforts regarding the release of child soldiers from armed groups. The UK will continue to work through the UN to ensure efforts are made towards demobilisation and reunion with families.

China

China's economic growth continued in 2014, leading to further improvements in the social and economic rights of many of its citizens. In contrast, civil and political rights remained subject to tight restrictions, media censorship continued, and space for civil society remained constrained. This was part of a broader, restrictive trend politically, which saw an increased emphasis on the importance of communist ideology. This imposed tighter controls over artistic and literary circles, and a major campaign of political education within the Communist Party of China (CPC). Of principal concern were detentions of human rights defenders (HRDs) for the peaceful expression of their views. These continued as part of an ongoing clampdown on freedom of expression, association and assembly. There were particular spikes in detentions, including in the run-up to the 25th anniversary of the clearance of the Tiananmen Square protests; and the Hong Kong protest movements, which began in September. Suppression of ethnic unrest in Tibet and Xinjiang also continued. There were some signs of intent to improve the rule of law. In July, the Supreme People's Court (SPC) announced reforms aimed at eliminating judicial corruption and preventing miscarriages of justice. In October, the Fourth Plenum of the 18th Congress of the CPC underlined the SPC agenda. It promised more accountable and transparent government, and anticipated "real respect and protection" for human rights by 2020. However, the plenum was also explicit in re-stating CPC leadership over China's courts, setting real limits to judicial independence.

The UK's approach to human rights in China remained one of active engagement. We continued to encourage China to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Elsewhere, we focused on abolition of the death penalty, improvements to justice and the rule of law, freedom of expression, and ethnic minority rights. We lobbied at all levels. At the UK-China Summit in June, the Prime Minister and Premier Li Keqiang emphasised "the importance of promoting and protecting human rights and the rule of law". Senior ministers raised human rights during bilateral meetings and visits. The 21st round of the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue was held in London on 19-20 May. It provided for detailed, expert engagement on our range of human rights concerns. We also raised these in international fora, including the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and through the EU. We promoted international human rights standards through public diplomacy activities. We also financed projects in-country, including to prevent torture, work towards death penalty abolition, and support women's rights.

Improvement in the human rights situation in 2015 will depend in part on progress towards implementing stated reforms. These include recommendations accepted by China in adopting the outcome of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in March. However, China rejected most of the recommendations related to civil and political rights, including the UK's recommendations, which had called on China to abolish extra-judicial and arbitrary detention, and to set a clear timetable for ratification of the ICCPR. Those who wish to express their constitutional right to express their views peacefully could face significant challenges in 2015. We will continue to encourage the Chinese government to recognise that peaceful and open

criticism makes a positive contribution towards improving governance. It also helps to tackle deep-rooted problems, such as corruption. How China concludes its one-year “strike hard” campaign in Xinjiang in May will be a test of its handling of human rights in ethnic minority areas.

Elections

According to its constitution, China is a multi-party socialist state under the guidance of the CPC. However, in practice, China operates as a one-party state. Direct elections take place only for village committees and local people’s congresses.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Freedom of expression and of the press is guaranteed under the Chinese constitution but severely limited in practice. Restrictions increased in 2014 and were most apparent in the weeks leading up to 4 June, the 25th anniversary of the clearance of the Tiananmen Square protests. At least 50 HRDs were reported to have been detained for planning or attending commemorative events. Most were released, but others remained in detention on unrelated charges. We raised our concerns throughout the year, both at ministerial level and during the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue.

Online censorship continued, and an increasing number of foreign websites were blocked. New regulations issued in August required users of instant-messaging platforms to abide by seven “bottom lines” and to register with real names. Social media opinion leaders continued to self-censor for fear of being prosecuted for “spreading rumours”. Following months of disruption, Google’s email service was blocked in December.

The right to strike and protest remained limited in law and practice in China. In an attempt to limit mainland support for the Hong Kong protest movements, the BBC English language website was blocked in October. So, too, was all footage showing the extent of protests in Hong Kong. More than 100 individuals were reportedly detained on the mainland for their support of the protests.

The CPC, under Xi Jinping, continued to tighten ideological control and hence the space for diverse views to be aired in public. Seven off-limit topics – including universal values, press freedom, and civil rights – provided an ideological baseline for resisting “Westernisation”. Liberal intellectuals and artists continued to be detained, suspended, or dismissed from their jobs for non-compliance.

Human Rights Defenders

Dissident blogger Hu Jia continued to face harassment from security forces and was placed under house arrest on multiple occasions. Kunming blogger Dong Rubin was sentenced to six-and-a-half years’ imprisonment in July for “spreading online rumours”. Writer Huang Zerong (Tie Liu) was detained in September for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” after allegedly criticising CPC leaders.

Uyghur academic, Dr Ilham Tohti, was sentenced to life imprisonment for “separatism” in September. This was apparently related to the content of his interviews, articles and lectures. The UK, EU and other governments expressed

concern about the sentence and lack of transparency during the trial, and called for his release. Seven of Tohti’s former students were tried on similar charges in November.

Liu Xia, wife of imprisoned Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo, remained under extra-legal house arrest, her movements severely restricted. She continued to suffer ill health and was given access to limited medical treatment. Human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng was released from prison in August after completing his eight-year sentence for inciting subversion. He was reportedly held in solitary confinement and tortured while detained, and remained under close police supervision upon release. Ethnic Mongolian activist Hada was released from prison in December, but remained subject to residential surveillance.

Many HRDs suffering serious health conditions were denied bail, parole or access to medical treatment. A number were in severe ill-health upon release from detention and, in some cases, including Tibetan political prisoner Goshul Lobsang, died shortly after.

UPR activist Cao Shunli died in hospital in March after reportedly being denied medical treatment for liver disease and tuberculosis. Following her death, the UK urged China to provide adequate medical care to all detainees.

UK officials and ministers also continued to raise concerns about HRDs subjected to procedurally flawed trials, to which diplomats and media were consistently denied access.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Human rights lawyers continued to report being obstructed, harassed, arbitrarily disbarred, administratively detained, and physically assaulted by officials. There were reports of extra-judicial and arbitrary detention, often used to detain HRDs to avoid embarrassment around high-profile events. Defence lawyers were not permitted access to their clients in some politically sensitive human rights cases.

Irregularities were reported in many trials, including that of Guangzhou activist Guo Feixiong (Yang Maodong). He was reportedly cut off during the presentation of his defence. State media continued to screen televised confessions as a tool for shaming outspoken HRDs. Journalist Gao Yu “confessed” to “leaking state secrets” in May, subsequently stating that her confession had been made under duress.

Working with China, the UK supported a variety of projects focused on improving access to justice and rule of law.

Death Penalty

The Chinese government treats death penalty figures as a state secret. However, it is believed that China executes the largest number of people in the world. It retains 55 capital offences, including for non-violent and economic crimes. During the Fourth Plenum, a draft amendment recommended that the number of crimes eligible for capital punishment be reduced to 46. But there was no indication as to when this might take effect. High-profile media coverage of miscarriages of justice and greater scrutiny by the Chinese judiciary may be reducing the overall number of people executed. However, many

Uyghurs were sentenced to death in expedited trials as part of a security crackdown.

In a positive development, China announced in December that it would cease harvesting organs from executed prisoners by 1 January 2015.

The UK is working with the Chinese judiciary to limit use of the death penalty for certain crimes, in line with our objective of the global abolition of the death penalty.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Chinese law prohibits torture, physical abuse and insulting prisoners' dignity. However, reports of abuse, mistreatment and torture continued to emerge during 2014. The UK is working with Chinese authorities to prevent torture within the detention and prison system.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Freedom of religion or belief is provided for by the Chinese constitution but restricted in practice. In 2014, the destruction of Christian churches was witnessed in the entrepreneurial province of Zhejiang. This is explained as much by local CPC leaders' apparent desire to apply building regulations as by a wider policy to restrict Christianity, which is gaining popularity, and is viewed by many officials as playing a positive role in "social stability" – as long as local church leaders follow official policy.

Many Christians choose to worship in unofficial "house churches" in China. When their activities are deemed to challenge CPC authority, house church leaders continue to be detained, including Henan pastor Zhang Shaojie, sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment on fraud and public order offences in August.

Relations between the state-sponsored Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Holy See remained difficult. Shanghai Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin reportedly remained under house arrest in Sheshan Seminary.

Falun Gong continued to be subject to repression, with reports of its practitioners being prosecuted for "illegal cult activities".

Women's Rights

Gender-based violence remained a widespread social problem, but subject to increasing awareness and debate. China's judiciary has paid close attention to domestic violence in recent years. In a landmark ruling in June, the SPC overturned the death sentence of Li Yan, a woman convicted of killing her abusive husband in 2010. The government also drafted its first anti-domestic violence law in November, to which the UK contributed comments via the EU. Initiatives to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the 1995 Beijing Declaration will maintain the focus on women's rights.

The UN Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women met in October to review progress in a number of countries, including China. It noted improvement in some areas, such as employment law, but called for more action in the judicial and political spheres.

Family planning policies continued to be enforced. Despite the relaxation of some family planning regulations in 2013, reports of forced abortions and sterilisations continued. We raised our concerns during the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue.

Other Issues

Tibet

The UK's policy on Tibet remains unchanged. The UK recognises Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China and does not support Tibetan independence. During 2014, we continued to call for all parties to engage in substantive dialogue. We pressed the Chinese authorities to exercise restraint, respect religious and cultural freedoms, and allow unrestricted access to Tibetan areas for international journalists, NGOs and diplomats. Foreign & Commonwealth Office Minister for Asia, Hugo Swire participated in a parliamentary debate on Tibet in December and re-stated the UK's position. The UK raised concerns about ethnic minority rights at the HRC, and during the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue.

The Chinese authorities continued to restrict access to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) for foreigners. A UK diplomat was, however, granted permission to visit the TAR on an escorted visit in June – the first in three years. British officials also visited Tibetan areas in neighbouring provinces. Security in the TAR is substantial and entrenched. A propaganda campaign against the Dalai Lama continued.

Episodes of unrest continued in 2014. Local authorities reportedly used lethal force to disperse protestors in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, in August. Reports suggest that five Tibetans died.

There were at least 10 reported self-immolations in Tibetan regions in 2014; all were fatal. There were further reports of the criminal detention and conviction of Tibetans in relation to self-immolations.

There were ongoing reports of the arbitrary detention and imprisonment of Tibetan lay people and monks in relation to restrictions on their freedom of expression, association and assembly. Reports suggested a number of singers and songwriters were detained for peaceful expression of their views. In September, monk Lobsang Gendun was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment after publicly calling for the return of the Dalai Lama in 2013. Tibetan filmmaker, Dhondup Wangchen, was released from prison in June after serving a six-year sentence.

For the fourth year in succession, there were no talks between the Chinese authorities and representatives of the Dalai Lama, extending the longest hiatus in the past decade.

Xinjiang

Embassy officials visiting parts of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) observed significant restrictions to the cultural, linguistic and religious rights of ethnic minority communities. They saw official efforts to discourage certain Islamic dress customs, and restrictions on the celebration of Ramadan. There was a heavy security presence and marked tensions between security forces and local communities.

Further outbreaks of violence and unrest occurred in 2014. At least 200 civilians and security officers were reported to have died in a series of incidents. Some of these were terrorist attacks, including that on a marketplace in Urumqi on 22 May. It killed at least 43 people and was condemned by the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague. In the aftermath, Chinese authorities announced a year-long “strike hard” campaign. This prompted concerns about due legal process, with mass sentencing, arrest and detention rallies being held in parts of the XUAR. State media reported that 380 people were detained, and 315 convicted in the first month alone. At least 30 people were sentenced to death on terrorism charges in 2014.

Refugees and asylum seekers

China continued to refuse to recognise the status of refugees and asylum seekers from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), treating them as illegal economic migrants and continuing to return (refouler) them throughout 2014.

Civil society

Civil society groups faced legislative and financial barriers. Restrictions on civil society activism continued throughout 2014. Some NGOs reported official harassment and interference, particularly when engaged in politically sensitive or public advocacy activities.

The trial of civic activists associated with the New Citizen’s Movement (NCM) took place in January. Its founder, Dr Xu Zhiyong, was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment for “gathering a crowd to disturb public order”. LGB&T groups in Beijing and Chongqing reported that their events were cancelled at the last minute because the authorities put pressure on the owners of the venues. Some group members and their lawyers were reportedly detained on charges of “fraud” or “illegal business activities”.

Public advocacy remained tightly controlled. Organisers of commemorative events to mark the 25th anniversary of the clearance of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 were detained, as were mainland supporters of the Hong Kong protest movements.

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

The UK government continued to take seriously its commitments under the Sino-British Joint Declaration. The FCO published biannual reports to Parliament on the implementation of the Joint Declaration and operation of the “One Country, Two Systems” model, covering the period from 1 July to 31 December 2013 and 1 January to 30 June 2014 respectively. The reports covered a broad range of major political, economic and constitutional developments and set out the UK’s position on significant issues of interest or concern in Hong Kong over the reporting period.

On 31 August, a decision by China’s National People’s Congress re-confirmed the objective for the election of Hong Kong’s Chief Executive would be through universal suffrage. We recognised that the detailed terms of the decision would disappoint those arguing for a more open nomination process. Large-scale protests subsequently took place from 28 September to 15 December. Against this backdrop, we

continued to make clear that it was important that Hong Kong citizens’ fundamental rights and freedoms were respected, as guaranteed by the Joint Declaration. We also reiterated that demonstrators should express their views in accordance with the law. The response by the Hong Kong police was largely proportionate and restrained. Hong Kong’s media played a vital role in both monitoring events and providing a forum for discussion. The Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, and Mr Swire consistently set out the view that Hong Kong’s future was best served by a transition to universal suffrage, in line with Hong Kong’s Basic Law. It should also meet the aspirations of the people of Hong Kong, offering a genuine choice in the election of the Chief Executive, paving the way for further reform, including of the Legislative Council in 2020.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is due to launch a two-month consultation on electoral reform in January 2015. This will be ahead of a resolution on the amendments to the method for selecting the Chief Executive.

Colombia

In 2014, the government of Colombia continued to make efforts to improve its human rights situation, in line with the recommendations of the country's 2013 Universal Periodic Review. President Santos began his second term on 7 August, and displayed a strong commitment to addressing human rights. His new cabinet included a new Ministry for Post-conflict, Security and Human Rights within the Presidency, headed by General Oscar Naranjo, former Chief of Police in Colombia. The conversion of the Presidential Programme of Human Rights into a High Advisory Office within the Presidency also raised the status of the issue. Guillermo Rivera, co-author of the Victims and Land Restitution Law which deals with reparations to victims of the conflict, was appointed as Presidential Advisor on Human Rights. These institutional changes have made human rights a priority issue across the Colombian government, and demonstrated the real political will to improve the current situation.

The government's priority remained the ongoing peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). These negotiations provided an opportunity to bring about significant improvements in the human rights situation in the long term, both by securing an end to the armed conflict the country has suffered for over 50 years, and providing justice for the conflict's millions of victims. At the talks in Havana, agreements were reached in 2014 on three agenda points: agricultural development, political participation and illicit drugs. Negotiators also discussed, in parallel, victims' rights and the end of the conflict; the final point regarding implementation will be negotiated once agreements have been reached. On 30 October, FARC delegates from the negotiating team publicly acknowledged for the first time that the group had caused harm to civilians, and said they would assume their share of responsibility for human rights abuses during Colombia's conflict. After the resumption of talks in December, following a two-week suspension triggered by the FARC's capture of General-Brigadier Alzate, the FARC also declared an indefinite unilateral ceasefire from 20 December. There is cautious hope that 2015 could see a real chance for peace in Colombia.

Despite these positive changes, the government was unable to ensure respect for human rights throughout the country due to the continuation of the armed conflict. There were serious abuses; the majority occurred in rural parts of the country, particularly where the state's presence is limited, and were committed by illegal groups (*bandas criminales* – BACRIM). We were concerned at the increase in threats against human rights defenders (HRDs) compared to 2013 figures, according to Colombian NGO *Somos Defensores* ("We are Defenders"). More positively, the same NGO reported that the number of HRDs killed decreased by a third since 2013.

The UK supported a range of activities in Colombia, as part of our wider objectives to promote human rights. We encouraged work to protect HRDs, who are vital to achieving advances in the wider human rights situation. Our other priority areas included access to justice, preventing sexual violence against women, and business and human rights. A number of high-profile visits offered opportunities for the UK to raise issues

related to human rights at the highest level: Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall (October); Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg (February); the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague (February); Minister for International Security Strategy, Dr Andrew Murrison (January); and Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for the Americas, Hugo Swire (June) all visited Colombia in 2014. These individuals discussed, with President Santos and other Colombian ministers, both the progress regarding human rights so far and the remaining areas of concern.

The Colombian government's priorities for 2015 include the continued focus on human rights across all ministries, tackling impunity, and promoting victims' rights. Much of the government's success here will depend on the progress of the peace negotiations in Havana, which provide both an opportunity and a challenge. An eventual peace agreement with the FARC is expected to have positive effects on the broad human rights agenda in Colombia, although the government recognises that many of the underlying issues require substantial reform across government, and long-term commitment to be fully addressed.

The UK will continue to support this process, and to engage with relevant ministries within the Colombian government to ensure the implementation of policies designed to reduce human rights abuses. Our priorities will continue to be promoting access to justice, the security of HRDs, business and human rights and preventing sexual violence.

Elections

Colombia has an established electoral system, upheld by strong institutions and an active civil society. Colombia held parliamentary elections in March and presidential elections in May and June. Both election processes were deemed free and fair by the Organisation of American States (OAS).

Elections were held on 9 March for the 2014-18 Congress. Colombia has a long-standing tradition of free elections, and the OAS observer mission was quick to commend them. There were no attacks by illegal armed groups on the day, and only one voting station was moved to another location for security reasons. The Electoral Observation Mission (MOE), and other commentators were clear that indicators of violence and intimidation were significantly down in the run-up to the elections: there were around 14 attacks against candidates and individuals, compared with 70 attacks four years ago. Opposition parties emerged on the right and left as a result of the elections. The *Union Patriótica* (UP), the political party associated with the FARC, and destroyed in the 1990s through assassinations and intimidation by the extreme right, was reformed and put forward a presidential candidate.

The presidential elections held in May went to a run-off in June, when incumbent President Santos won with 51% of the vote against *Centro Democrático* candidate Zuluaga. Observers assessed that the second round of the elections were free and fair, though allegations of hacking of emails, corruption and vote-buying remained. Investigations into the latter are ongoing. There were no terrorist attacks recorded against voters. The FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Programme (HRDP) funded a project with the MOE to strengthen the

transparency of the elections through electoral strategies and electoral risk maps. This was subsequently used by the Ministry of Interior as a tool to respond to regional risks quickly and reduce incidents of fraud. British diplomats also acted as international observers for the MOE.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Abuses of freedom of expression occurred mainly in the areas most affected by the conflict, with some journalists suffering death threats and attacks. According to a report by Reporters without Borders, two journalists were murdered in Colombia, the same number as in 2013. The Foundation for Freedom of the Press (FLIP) reported 69 threats against journalists, a decrease of 8% when compared to the 75 threats recorded in 2013. Similarly, the total number of victims recorded was 162, decreasing from 194 in 2013. The Office of the Attorney General continued to follow its policy of prioritising crimes against journalists, and worked closely with FLIP to improve the management and investigation of such cases.

There was evidence of journalists targeted for their work relating to the peace process. In August, a journalist's home in Bogotá was broken into and evidence destroyed. In December, media groups and 14 journalists were threatened by the criminal group Águilas Negras. There were also continued allegations of military espionage against the peace process, with chief negotiator for the government, Humberto de la Calle, revealing that his personal communications had been tapped in October.

Violence against trade unionists also remained an area of concern. According to the National Unionist School, an NGO supported by the main trade unions in Colombia, 20 trade unionists were killed between January and November. The Office of the Attorney General created a central sub-unit focused solely on crimes against trade unionists, and worked with the Directorate of Analysis and Context to pass 600 sentences, according to government figures. The British Embassy continued to monitor trade unionist cases and engage with unionist groups. On 10 November, an Embassy official visited Huber Ballesteros in prison, a leading member of the trade union group *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia* (CUT), who was arrested in August 2013 for alleged rebellion and terrorist financing.

In April, strikes by agricultural workers affected some parts of Colombia. Though most of the country remained unaffected, some main roads were blocked, and there were isolated clashes with police. There were also trade unionist strikes in June and July in the coal transportation industry, and immigration officials took part in a strike at El Dorado International Airport in December.

Human Rights Defenders

Over the course of 2014, a large number of HRDs, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, as well as land restitution leaders, were victims of death threats and other abuses committed by various actors of the armed conflict. According to the Colombian NGO *Somos Defensores*, there were 626 attacks against HRDs in 2014. Of these, 488 were threats and 55 were murders. These figures indicate a 71% increase in threats,

when compared to 2013, and a decrease of 31% in the number of murders. There are no official figures available from the government, as its Human Rights Observatory no longer provides figures for attacks against HRDs, nor is there official data indicating which groups are behind the violence against them.

The Colombian government responded proactively to allegations of threats against HRDs. In March, the Ministry of Interior announced the development of two public policies to support HRDs as a result of consultation with civil society. In October, the Ministry reactivated the National Round Table on Guarantees for Human Rights, Social and Community Leaders after a year of inactivity. This represented the highest level of dialogue between the government and civil society. In addition, according to the Colombian government, the Office of the Attorney General successfully investigated 60 attacks against HRDs, sentencing 68 people for these crimes.

The National Protection Unit is responsible for coordinating and implementing protective measures for those at risk due to their activities. In 2014, it had an annual budget of £120 million, and provided protection to over 8,000 Colombians, of whom 3,000 were HRDs. Despite reporting a £22 million budget deficit in September, leading to a cut in 200 protection schemes, the Minister of Interior guaranteed that protection measures for HRDs, journalists, land restitution claimants, and victims would not be reduced, and the cut would apply only to officials protected by the scheme.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

In 2014, the Attorney General's Office began structural reforms (planned to reach their conclusion in 2016), including the creation of 3,500 new posts and renewing the focus against organised crime. However, Colombia's judicial system continued to be overwhelmed and under-resourced. Judicial delays affected most investigations, and a judicial sector strike of over 90 days between October 2014 and January 2015 led to the postponement of over 23,000 hearings. Strikers protested that the justice system was over-burdened by at least three times the caseload the judges could deal with.

According to the Colombian Prison Authority, INPEC, prisons were overcrowded by 148% nationally, as of 30 November. The four largest prisons in the country currently house 28,000 people, instead of the 12,000 they are designed for. There is an overall national capacity for 78,022 prisoners, but 115,634 are incarcerated. Consequently, many prisoners live in poor conditions, with inadequate provisions for nutrition and sanitation. INPEC officials were involved in protests between August 2014 and January 2015 about prison conditions and employment benefits. They officially called off their protests in December after talks with the Ministry of Justice to address their concerns.

The military jurisdiction bill (*Fuero Militar*) was approved in its fourth debate of eight on 11 December. The bill was controversial in deciding which crimes committed during active duty should be sentenced in military, rather than civilian, courts. The Colombian Ministry of Defence publicly confirmed that extrajudicial executions would not fall under the army's jurisdiction, along with six other types of crimes,

including torture, enforced disappearance and sexual violence. Conviction rates remain low for such crimes, with the Attorney General's Office reporting in September that only 16 of 1,579 registered cases of extrajudicial killings had received a sentence to date. We continue to monitor the development of the reforms closely.

On 10 December, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) considered claims against the Colombian State for human rights violations in connection with the siege of the Palace of Justice in Bogotá in 1985, when 11 people "disappeared" and five tortured. The IACHR ruled that Colombia should speed up its investigations and compensate the victims. The government acknowledged its responsibility in the case, and committed to address the IACHR's recommendations.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

Victims of the Colombian conflict continued to benefit from the victims reparations and land restitution policies. According to the government's Victims Unit, which published updated figures on 1 November, the total number of people registered as victims in Colombia is over 7 million. Of these, just over 6 million are registered as victims of displacement. They report that in the last two years, 320,000 victims received reparations. The number of both victims and threats registered decreased significantly when compared to 2013 figures. The number of victims fell from 244,902 to 101,491, and threats decreased from 38,172 to 16,033.

The land restitution process continued to progress, though government authorities admitted that there would be delays in returning land to claimants while the conflict continues. By 30 November, the Land Restitution Unit registered a total of 72,000 land restitution claims (over 18,000 more than in 2013), with land judges issuing 1,800 rulings benefitting 11,800 people and covering around 85,000 hectares. A December report by Amnesty International, "A Land Title is not Enough: Ensuring Sustainable Land Restitution in Colombia", recorded lower figures up to August, assessing the number of rulings at 650, covering a total of 29,695 hectares and benefitting 2,687 individuals. The report concluded that, while the law represented a significant step forward to respect victims' rights to full reparation, the process was too slow, and did not adequately protect land claimants' rights.

Business and Human Rights

The British Embassy worked to support the government, civil society and companies to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in Colombia, through the design of a National Public Policy (or National Action Plan). As a result of three years of projects funded through the HRDP, the policy guidelines were launched in July by the Presidential Office for Human Rights. The Colombian government intends to implement the guidelines through their National Development Plan in 2015.

The project also supported the Inspector-General's office, a state agency responsible for overseeing public servants' behaviour and monitoring their compliance in implementing public policies, to create a directive on business and human

rights, which was published in April. This set out principles for public servants to implement and monitor the UNGPs.

The Colombian government is still the only Latin American country that currently participates in the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. It also submitted an application to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in 2014.

Women's Rights

Of the 7 million victims of the Colombian armed conflict registered by the government, half are women. The Victims Unit stated that, by 1 November, 7,353 were officially recorded as victims of sexual violence.

The Colombian government is committed to upholding women's rights and tackling sexual violence in conflict. It has set up one of the most comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks globally for this issue and, in 2014, several key cases were processed against ex-paramilitaries. On 28 November, Salvatore Mancuso and other leaders from the now disbanded Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia were sentenced by the "Peace and Justice Tribunal" for 175 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, and ordered to compensate 9,500 victims.

On 2 December, the International Criminal Court issued a preliminary report for Colombia. The report recognised positive steps taken by authorities to prosecute crimes of sexual violence in conflict, but expressed concerns with the limited progress made on cases, with impunity rates at 98%. Nevertheless, 2014 was significant for women's rights, as President Santos signed a new law for access to justice for victims of sexual violence (Law 1719). This defined new types of crimes, such as sexual slavery and exploitation, and set out specific criteria for investigation and recognising sexual violence in conflict as a crime against humanity. On 5 August, the President signed a decree declaring 25 May as the "National Day for the dignity of victims of sexual violence".

The prevention of sexual violence in conflict formed a core part of the British Embassy's human rights work this year. We worked with civil society organisations supporting victims at a grassroots level, delivered a capacity-building programme for prosecutors to the Attorney General's Office, and promoted the implementation of the International Protocol on the Investigation and Documentation of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Children's Rights

Children in Colombia continued to be affected by the armed conflict, remaining vulnerable to recruitment by illegal armed groups. According to government agency the Colombian Institute for Family Wellbeing (ICBF), 180 children were recruited by the FARC, 41 by the ELN (National Liberation Army), and 17 by the BACRIM this year. The Victims Unit recorded 7,722 children involved in the armed conflict from January to November. According to the 2014 annual report by the Colombian Ministry of Defence, 20% of the 1,240 demobilised guerrillas in this same period were children.

Minority Rights

Indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups continued to be amongst the worst affected by the Colombian armed conflict. In 2014, the National Indigenous Organisation (ONIC) claimed an additional 35 indigenous groups, along with the 31 already recognised as being in danger of physical and cultural extinction, were endangered. This is as a result of their demographic fragility, the armed conflict, the cultivation of illicit crops, illegal mining, and extractive and agro-industrial mega-projects. Over 70% of indigenous groups live in rural areas and are disproportionately affected by the conflict.

The ONIC estimated that, between January and September, ten indigenous leaders were assassinated, and 236 unable to leave their communities due to the conflict. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that, between January and May, 10 events of mass displacement occurred, affecting 4,500 indigenous people.

Indigenous leaders continued to be targets of death threats, and the ONIC reported the number of threats from illegal armed groups and criminal groups was on the rise. Between January and September, 36 indigenous rights defenders were threatened.

LGBT Rights

The government of Colombia has taken steps in 2014 to demonstrate its commitment to promote the rights of LGBT people. At the UN Human Rights Council held in Geneva in September, Colombia co-sponsored the resolution to combat violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In August, Colombia's Constitutional Court also ruled that sexual orientation could not be applied as a discriminating factor in "second-parent adoption" cases.

Cuba

The human rights situation in Cuba saw further gradual improvements in 2014, though there were still significant concerns. Cubans were still denied fundamental civil and political rights, including freedom of expression and assembly and political choice. There was a rise in reported short-term detentions of those protesting or undertaking political activity. Access to independent media and the internet remained heavily restricted.

The historic announcements by the United States and Cuba on 17 December, including the intention to re-establish diplomatic ties, is widely expected to lead to further progress on human rights in 2015. As part of the negotiated agreement, Cuba released United States Agency for International Development contractor, Alan Gross, on humanitarian grounds, and President Castro agreed to the release of a number of Cubans in prison and "of interest" to the United States. At the end of the year, details of the identity of these prisoners, when they would be released, and the conditions of their release, remained unclear. In comments made on 18 December, Foreign & Commonwealth (FCO) Minister for the Americas, Hugo Swire, welcomed the announcements, and recognised some of the advances made in Cuba in the last few years, particularly in new economic freedoms, the release of political prisoners, and the easing of travel restrictions. Mr Swire also encouraged further progress on economic reforms and human rights.

The UK continued a policy of raising human rights concerns, while engaging constructively with Cuba to support its reform agenda. Mr Swire visited Cuba in October, the first British Minister to visit in nearly a decade. Mr Swire signed three Memoranda of Understanding with Cuba, including one on foreign policy dialogue containing an arrangement to discuss human rights. During his visit, Mr Swire discussed our human rights concerns with the Cuban government, the Catholic Church, and the National Centre for Sex Education.

The UK supports a closer political dialogue between the EU and Cuba, and negotiations continued on a new Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. The agreement will allow the EU to respond more effectively to Cuba's ongoing process of change. The promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms will remain central to the EU-Cuba relationship.

In 2015, the UK will continue to promote freedom of expression in our public communications, and engage with the government, human rights defenders (HRDs), opposition activists, independent journalists, and broader civil society. The Embassy is monitoring the impact of the 17 December announcement on the human rights situation in Cuba. This will include the conditions under which prisoners are released and progress made on other commitments in the announcement.

Elections

Cuba is a one-party state governed by the Cuban Communist Party which has a President elected by the National Assembly. The current President is Raúl Castro. He was elected in 2008, again in 2013, and has said that he will serve until 2018, after which he will step down. Cubans are allowed to vote, and

the process generally allows fair access to polls and secret balloting. However, the elections cannot be termed free or fair: standing candidates must have prior approval from party officials, and therefore genuine opposition candidates are unable to stand.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Freedom of expression and assembly continued to be restricted during 2014. Cuba ranks 170 out of 179 countries in the Reporters Without Borders 2014 World Press Freedom Index.

Internet access improved, but only slightly, and from a very low baseline. Following the opening of internet cafés, the government introduced a mobile internet service in March. But connectivity is slow and extremely expensive at US\$1 per Mb, given that the average monthly wage in the dominant public sector is US\$20. High-speed internet is available in Cuba, via an undersea fibre optic cable, but has not been rolled out, and over 90% of the population is still cut off from the internet. The highest speeds appear to be reserved for international hotels and some businesses. Despite this, there is a lively and increasingly open debate on social media, with HRDs, civil society, state and independent journalists, the diaspora, and government officials all active, though much of their audience is outside Cuba. Blogger Yoani Sanchez (over 600,000 Twitter followers) launched an online newspaper in May. As part of the United States/Cuba announcements, the Cuban government committed to extend internet access, and the United States plans to allow the export of telecommunications equipment to Cuba. This will potentially make it easier for the Cuban government to fulfil their commitment, and will be a key test of its attitude to freedom of expression.

Over 100 activists were reportedly detained or threatened in the run-up to and during the 2nd Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which took place in Havana on 28-29 January. As a result of the arrests and intimidation, activities planned by opposition and human rights groups were prevented from taking place, including the "Democracy Forum", organised by the Centre for the Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL). The head of CADAL, an Argentina-based human rights NGO, travelled to Cuba to attend the forum. However, he was not allowed into the country, and was sent back to Argentina. Cuban activists also faced detention and harassment, including Manuel Cuesta Morua, who was detained for "distributing false information against world peace", and Daniel Ferrer García, President of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU). Both were subsequently released.

The official Cuban press marked Human Rights Day on 10 December with articles outlining Cuba's policy on human rights, though with a focus on Cuba's work to promote the right to health. A number of official events were also held. Human rights and civil society groups, including the Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco) held demonstrations. As in previous years, there were widespread reports of short-term detentions and aggressive treatment by the authorities. The other reported widespread use of short-term detentions was in the run-up to an open mic event planned by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera on 30 December, in Revolution Square.

On 23 December, just after the United States/Cuba announcements, a group called the Civil Society Open Forum met in Havana. This group describes itself as a forum for debate for the opposition. They issued an online statement at the end of their meeting setting out changes they would like to see in Cuba. However, this would have reached a very limited audience in Cuba itself.

Human Rights Defenders

HRDs were severely restricted in their movements and activities, and were frequently subject to short-term detentions. This involved being held for a few hours and often fined before being released. Many of the detentions were politically motivated. One of the main sources of information on the number of short-term detentions experienced by political activists and human rights defenders is the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHHRN). They reported 8,899 short-term detentions across the year, up 2,475 from 2013. These figures are impossible to verify. However, this marked increase in reported cases in 2014 is of concern. It is positive that President Castro agreed to release a number of political prisoners of interest to the United States as part of the announcements of 17 December; the UK will monitor the conditions of their release when this takes place.

There were frequent reports of physical attacks, threats and harassment of family members. Activists increasingly used Twitter to post photos of their colleagues' injuries, following alleged physical attacks, and of police activities during protests.

Internationally recognised prisoner of conscience, Rafael Matos Montes de Oca, was freed on 14 January. He was sentenced in 2012 to two-and-a-half years for "social dangerousness". By the end of 2014, there were five Amnesty prisoners of conscience in Cuba.

Jorge Luis Garcia, "Antúnez", a prominent activist, was frequently intimidated, including through short-term detentions and confiscation of his possessions. He initiated a hunger strike to try to get his belongings back.

Just prior to Human Rights Day, on 9 December, Ladies in White member Sonia Garro Alfonso and her husband Ramón Alejandro Muñoz, who were arrested on 18 March 2012, were released from detention in prison, having been held on charges of "contempt, public disorder and attempted murder". Their trial, together with that of fellow activist Eugenio Hernández Hernández, was postponed four times, in November 2013, June 2014, October 2014, and November 2014, with no reason given.

With very little internet and a tightly controlled press, it was difficult for HRDs' messages to reach the public. They relied on leaflets, word of mouth and sporadic, tiny demonstrations to get the message out. Some turned to hunger strikes. Activists were labelled as "counter-revolutionaries", "traitors" and "US lackeys" by the authorities who reportedly used a range of tactics to prevent their activities, and the recruitment of new members. These practices were again very difficult to verify and monitor. With the lack of information available to most Cubans, they remained more or less oblivious to the activities of civil society and HRDs.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

There were still concerns in Cuba about a lack of judicial independence and rule of law, and the extensive use of short-term detentions. Access to independent lawyers was limited and those Cubans that who offered independent legal advice were often harassed by the security services. There was no time limit on pre-trial detentions and suspects were sometimes held for months or years without charge. Offences such as “public disorder” and “dangerousness” were used to arrest and convict Cubans who spoke out about human rights or against the government. Trials were sometimes postponed with no reason given.

The authorities have not yet organised a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. However, as part of the 17 December announcements with the US, Cuba committed to continue increasing engagement with international institutions like the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The UK will monitor developments in this area in 2015.

Death Penalty

The death penalty was last used in 2003 but remains provided for in the law for certain crimes. However, there are currently no prisoners facing the death penalty. Cuba again abstained in the biennial vote at the UN General Assembly.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Cuba’s constitution provides for the protection of religious freedom. However, the government monitors and strictly controls religious activity through its Office of Religious Affairs. In 2014, the Cuban government made Good Friday an official national holiday, after having restored the holiday as an exceptional measure in 2012. Miguel Díaz-Canel, the First Vice President of the Cuban Councils of State and Ministers, called for stronger unity with the local Christian Community. He met Cuban Evangelical and Protestant leaders from the Cuban Council of Churches, and said it was important to establish a permanent dialogue with the church. While restrictions remained on freedom of religion in Cuba, especially for those involved with certain civil society groups including the Ladies in White, these restrictions appeared to be gradually easing. The Pope’s role in the US Cuba announcements of 17 December drew positive coverage in the press, and a positive reaction from Cubans.

LGBT Rights

Overall, societal tolerance towards LGBT issues in Cuba slowly increased, and the law provided for some protection against discrimination. In comparison to the region, Cuba was among the most tolerant. However, LGBT people complained that they suffer harassment and discrimination, and that authorities were not doing enough to protect against this. Same-sex marriage was not allowed. In October, Mr Swire visited the National Centre for Sex Education, hosted by Mariela Castro, President Castro’s daughter, which continued to raise awareness of LGBT issues through educational campaigns. It also advocated further legal changes that protect against discrimination. Large numbers gathered in officially-sanctioned

events around Cuba to celebrate International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in May.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) continued to show no discernable improvement in 2014. While the DPRK's response to mounting calls for change by the international community showed some sensitivity to external pressure, this response was aimed at deflecting criticism, rather than taking serious steps to deliver improvements to its domestic human rights situation.

Supporting human rights, as in preceding years, remained one of our priorities for the DPRK in 2014. We continued to approach this in three ways: by ensuring the issue remained high on the international community's agenda; by using our policy of critical engagement to raise our concerns directly with the DPRK authorities; and by supporting small-scale projects aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable groups in the DPRK and increasing exposure to the outside world. The publication in February of the final report of the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) led to increased international focus on human rights in the DPRK. The UK took an active role in shaping the UN response, which included strong resolutions at both the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and the UN General Assembly (UNGA), an informal "Arria" briefing to the UN Security Council (UNSC) and, in December, the addition of a new item on the DPRK to the UNSC agenda.

Human rights will remain a priority for our the DPRK policy in 2015, alongside our counter proliferation work. We will continue to work with like-minded partners to apply pressure on the DPRK, urging the government to accept the existence and extent of human rights violations in-country, and to address these issues seriously by bringing about improvements and permanent change. We will also continue to maintain pressure on the DPRK through the HRC and offer our support to the presence the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is setting up in the Republic of Korea to collect further evidence of the situation in the DPRK. Alongside this, we will press the DPRK to deliver on the recommendations that they agreed to consider during their Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in May, and look for more creative avenues for bilateral and international engagement.

Accountability for human rights violations will remain a key concern in the year ahead. The UK and others have highlighted the need for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to be able to consider the situation in the DPRK given the COI's findings. As the DPRK is not a party to the Rome Statute, and is unlikely to accept the ICC's jurisdiction ad hoc, referral will need to be made through a UNSC resolution. The failure of efforts to refer Syria to the ICC in 2014 and the opposition of some members of the UNSC to even discussing human rights in the DPRK demonstrate the challenges to achieving such a resolution. However, the new UNSC agenda item on the DPRK provides a mechanism to keep this issue under discussion.

The COI found that the DPRK authorities were responsible for systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations, in some cases amounting to crimes against humanity. It made a number of recommendations, both for the DPRK and for the international community. These formed the basis of subsequent activity by the UN. Together with co-sponsors, the UK worked hard throughout 2014 to build on the momentum created by

the COI, and to show the DPRK that there can be no impunity for human rights violations. UK lobbying helped to secure strong resolutions at the HRC in March and the UNGA Third Committee in November, the latter subsequently confirmed by the UNGA plenary in December. Both resolutions reinforced the COI's call for the UNSC to consider the human rights situation in the DPRK, and take appropriate action to ensure accountability, including by considering a referral to the ICC.

In April, the COI gave an informal "Arria" briefing to the UNSC and, in May, UN member states drew on the report when making recommendations during the DPRK's UPR. The UK played an active part in both events. In June, the Foreign & Commonwealth (FCO) Minister for Asia Pacific, Hugo Swire, visited Geneva to take part in an Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, Mr Mazuki Darusman. He also raised the importance of human rights in the DPRK with the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, and stressed the importance of UN action.

The UK worked with partners to ensure formal discussion of human rights in the DPRK by the UNSC. In December, we and nine other members of the UNSC sent a joint letter to the UNSC President, requesting that the situation in the DPRK be placed on the council's agenda. On 22 December, the UNSC formally recognised the human rights situation in the DPRK as a potential threat to international peace and security, and held a first discussion of this new agenda item. During this meeting, the UK expressed its concern at the human rights situation in the DPRK and its belief that if the DPRK will not hold human rights violators to account, then the international community must be ready to do so. We also underlined that the DPRK authorities bear primary responsibility for protecting human rights in the DPRK and expressed our regret that the DPRK had withdrawn the offers of engagement made ahead of the UNGA Third Committee resolution in November.

Bilaterally, we took every opportunity in 2014 to ensure that the DPRK government was aware of our serious concern about the human rights situation in the country. Mr Swire made public statements urging the DPRK to comply with the COI's recommendations, and supporting action by the international community following the publication of the COI's report in February, and again after the March and November UN resolutions. We also continued to raise human rights concerns in our direct contacts with the DPRK. In February, a senior FCO official raised this issue with the DPRK Embassy. In March, the British Embassy in Pyongyang raised our concerns with the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In July, the FCO Director for Asia Pacific visited Pyongyang and, during meetings with the DPRK government and the Workers' Party of Korea, called for serious progress to be made in improving the human rights situation in accordance with international law. In August, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Pyongyang, together with other EU heads of mission, met the DPRK Foreign Minister, Ri Su Yong, who indicated a willingness to engage in dialogue with the EU on human rights. In October, the British Ambassador to Pyongyang met the Deputy Director of the International Organisations Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Han Tae Sung, and underlined the strength of UK concern on

this issue, calling for the DPRK to engage with international organisations.

In 2014, the FCO funded a range of projects in support of our country objectives for the DPRK. Our most significant commitment was a programme of English language teaching and training, delivered through the British Council. We also ran programmes which aimed to increase understanding in the DPRK of international financial and economic norms and freedom of expression.

The DPRK responded to this increased international attention by rejecting the COI's findings and claiming there were no human rights concerns in the DPRK. However, they did demonstrate a willingness, in limited circumstances, to undertake international engagement. In May, they acknowledged the UPR process provided an avenue for objective and impartial assessment by subjecting themselves to scrutiny from fellow HRC members. As part of this process they accepted 114 recommendations, mainly relating to social and economic rights. While a further 155 were "noted" (or rejected), this engagement was a noteworthy and welcome development. In October, there was a concerted diplomatic push from the DPRK to lobby on, and dilute the strength of, the EU-Japan sponsored resolution at the UNGA Third Committee. This included an offer to invite the UN Special Rapporteur to visit the DPRK in exchange for amendments to the draft resolution.

Elections

Elections to the 13th Supreme People's Assembly, the only significant state organ that appears to be directly elected, took place in March. Voting is compulsory and the selection of assembly members is far from democratic: only one candidate stands in each constituency and voting is not secret.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Whilst in theory the DPRK constitution guarantees freedom of expression, there remained little evidence of this, or freedom of movement or assembly in the DPRK. The general population was required to attend political gatherings in support of the DPRK leadership at regular intervals. The government maintains tight control over media, and access to foreign broadcasting is strictly limited. Reports suggest that people who are found to have access to foreign media without authorisation are subject to punishment, including imprisonment and, according to some reports, execution.

Human Rights Defenders

The security apparatus is ubiquitous in the DPRK and we have no evidence that there are any human rights defenders in the country. Some people who have defected have provided first-hand accounts of human rights violations. A number now work with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to campaign for the improvement of human rights in the DPRK. In collaboration with the British Council, we provide an English language training programme to defectors now living in the Republic of Korea to help them gain the necessary skills to be successful in higher education and compete in the job market. A Chevening Scholarship is also provided through this programme.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

The judicial system is not independent. The constitutional changes made in April 2012 confirmed that its prime function is to protect the existing socialist political system. In September, the DPRK Supreme Court sentenced American Matthew Todd Miller to six years' imprisonment with hard labour for committing "acts hostile" to the DPRK as part of the "US anti-DPRK human rights campaign". A state media report claimed that the trial had been held *in camera* at the request of the defendant. However, the fact that Mr Miller's trial was held in a closed court brought into question the legitimacy and transparency of the judicial process. On 8 November, Mr Miller and Kenneth Bae, another American citizen in detention in the DPRK, were released. The trials of both Mr Bae (who was serving a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment with hard labour) and Mr Miller had fallen short of international standards.

Whilst the releases of these detainees were a welcome development, the DPRK made no statement regarding them, nor provided a reason.

Death Penalty

There are 22 crimes that are officially punishable by death, but which are ambiguously defined in law. The DPRK does not provide statistics on the use of the death penalty. Throughout 2014, there were unconfirmed reports of executions. Officials usually refuse either to confirm or deny these claims, although in December they staged a press conference with a group of repatriated defectors who had been alleged to have been either executed or imprisoned.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

There is a substantial body of evidence from defectors that the DPRK government routinely uses torture in the criminal justice system. The DPRK denies this, but the volume of testimonials claiming that the practice continues is significant. The COI has played an important role in systematically recording and publishing some of this testimony.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

According to authorities in the DPRK, there are a small number of state-controlled churches and other state-sanctioned places of worship, including 500 house churches. We are unable to verify these statistics or to attest to the type of activity that takes place inside these house churches. However, there are many reports that people who are involved in religion outside these state-controlled organisations have been imprisoned for practising their beliefs. Officially recognised churches are effectively under state control.

Women's Rights

Despite formal equality, there is evidence that a subservient view of women is pervasive throughout families, public organisations and political life in the DPRK. Consistent reports suggest that sexual abuse and domestic violence is common. Conditions in the DPRK have also led thousands of women to cross the border into China illegally every year, where they are vulnerable to human-trafficking gangs and sexual exploitation.

Disability Rights

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the only convention that the DPRK has agreed to ratify, although they have not, as yet, completed ratification. In December, the DPRK held events in Pyongyang to mark International Disabled Person's Day. While the DPRK's willingness to acknowledge these events is encouraging, it is noteworthy that the DPRK citizens were not invited to participate.

Our engagement with the DPRK on disability issues aims to build the capacity of the DPRK to promote and protect disability rights and to provide small-scale practical support to persons with disabilities. During 2014, our Embassy in Pyongyang worked with international and domestic organisations in the DPRK to improve the treatment of disabled people. This included supporting a sports and cultural event for disabled children on the "National Day of People with Disability" to raise awareness of disability issues.

LGBT Rights

The DPRK authorities deny that LGBT persons exist. There is consequently neither legal nor practical protection for their rights.

Children's Rights

Whilst the DPRK signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography in September and formally ratified it in November 2014, children in the DPRK remain one of the most vulnerable groups of society. The government is obliged under its constitution to provide free, universal and compulsory education for children. However, most schools and universities outside Pyongyang are dilapidated and poorly equipped, and access to these institutions depends on the state authorities. As in previous years, children in the DPRK were removed from schools to be used for child labour and for taking part in national events such as mass gymnastic performances and other military and political rallies.

Other Issues

Social/economic welfare

People in the DPRK remain chronically malnourished and nutrition is poor. Despite moves to allow farmers to keep or sell some of their produce, some 70% of the DPRK population still rely on the public distribution system. The current rate of 400g of grain per person per day for the daily state ration falls well below the official government target of 573g. In November, the DPRK published its own national report on food security, after refusing to undertake a joint assessment on food security with the UN World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation. The DPRK data, which has not been corroborated by an independent source, suggests that although cereal production has improved, increased demand has resulted in a shortfall, which the DPRK will need to cover by imports or support from foreign donors. Whilst the DPRK continues to emphasise the need to improve the living standards of its population, we remain concerned that significant resources are still being focused on construction and

infrastructure projects, whilst the country lacks the ability to provide for the basic needs of its people.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) made some progress towards addressing human rights issues in 2014. However, there was no marked reduction in the number of violations and abuses, and accusations persisted that the army, police and security agencies were complicit in killings, rapes, and the ill treatment of detainees. The DRC government attended the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and engaged with the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) more generally. Despite this political commitment, women and girls continued to suffer in ongoing conflict in the DRC through rape, torture, and killing. Human rights abuses and violations, coupled with the further shrinking of political and civic space, reduced the ability for civil society groups and human rights defenders (HRDs) to operate effectively and hold those in power to account.

In 2014, our human rights objectives were focused on preventing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). We also exerted considerable effort to support initiatives to build greater stability in eastern DRC. These aimed to reduce the root causes of many human rights problems. UK-funded projects have assisted victims of SGBV in obtaining justice, including through expert assistance in documenting, collecting, and preserving forensic evidence, and by raising awareness of the levels of SGBV in the DRC. The UK strongly supported the efforts of the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in its mandate to protect civilians and target the armed groups that threaten the stability of the region. We continued to work with the broader international community to encourage the DRC and its neighbours to find a political solution to the ongoing conflict.

Throughout the year, we raised our concerns with the DRC on a range of human rights issues. We highlighted the importance of extending state authority effectively and quickly to areas vacated by combatants as a way of reducing the risk to civilians posed by armed groups. We used the UK Presidency of the UN Security Council in August to focus attention on the need to resolve the conflict. We also emphasised the need to offer greater support for HRDs and those working to promote rights in the DRC. This included raising our profound concern at the expulsion in October of UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) Director, and Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Scott Campbell, by the government of the DRC. The EU issued a [statement](#) on behalf of all member states expressing enduring support for the work of the UNJHRO and concern at the expulsion.

In 2015, we look forward to working with the new Government of National Unity appointed by President Kabila in December. Our principal human rights focus will remain preventing sexual violence. We will also monitor the situation of HRDs in the DRC, and encourage further commitments to freedom of expression. We will continue to encourage the DRC government to seize opportunities to bring greater security to its people and improve human rights, particularly by taking action against the biggest remaining armed group operating in eastern DRC, the FDLR, whose deadline for voluntary disarmament will expire on 2 January 2015. We will

also continue to focus the region on implementing its Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement.

Elections

Peaceful, free and fair elections in line with the DRC constitution are an important element in the continuing work to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Work to promote greater democratisation continued to form a key part of our efforts to build long-term peace and stability in the region. We continued to encourage the publication of an election timetable and budget for Presidential and Parliamentary elections due in 2016, and to involve the opposition in election planning.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

We encouraged the DRC government to ensure that the right to peaceful protest and freedom of expression was protected, and to work openly and constructively with all those seeking to uphold human rights in the DRC. The majority of protests and political gatherings in 2014 passed off peaceably, but DRC authorities were complicit in threats against journalists and HRDs. They also tolerated arbitrary arrests and even abductions. Violence, intimidation and threats directed at environmental activists campaigning against oil exploitation in the Virunga National Park were inadequately investigated by the authorities. In October, a Catholic convent was attacked, and priests were threatened in Lodja, after members of the Catholic and Anglican community highlighted their concerns over human rights abuses. The UK strongly condemned this violence. Together with EU partners, we made clear our objection to the arbitrary travel ban imposed upon opposition leader, Vital Kamerhe, which was eventually lifted by the authorities. We also raised concerns about allegations of violations against journalists and political opponents, including irregular judicial processes. These included the imprisonment of MP Diomi Ndongla and North Kivu MP Mohindo Nzangi, and the arrest of Jean Bertrand Ewanga, leader of the opposition Union for the Congolese Nation (UNC), following a public rally in Kinshasa in August. In September, the Supreme Court sentenced Ewanga to one year in prison for offending the head of state, members of the government, and parliament, even though the rally had been permitted. We issued a [joint statement](#) with EU colleagues condemning the heavy sentencing, and encouraging the DRC government to respect free expression and political activity, and to continue to engage in dialogue with the opposition.

Death Penalty

The death penalty remains in place in DRC. A moratorium on its use means that there have not been any executions for over ten years. In 2014, we used bilateral meetings with DRC government ministers and senior officials to outline our principled opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Amid concerns that prosecutors remained unaware of the provisions of the 2011 law criminalising torture, the DRC government worked to disseminate the law across the 11 provinces in the early part of 2014. This included roadshows

and the Vice Minister for Human Rights visiting provincial capitals.

Research published in June by UK-based charity Freedom from Torture, reported that persecutory rape, including gang rape and multiple rapes, was rife beyond the DRC's areas of conflict, and was used routinely by state officials to punish politically active women in Kinshasa and across the country. We raised these shocking allegations with the Vice Minister for Human Rights and pushed for an investigation. Whilst the DRC government did not acknowledge that the violations had taken place, it took the initiative to conduct surprise checks on police detention facilities. Those found to have been arbitrarily detained were released, and facilities, where human rights violations including torture were found to have taken place, were closed.

In October, the UNJHRO issued a report into "Likofi", a Congolese National Police (PNC) operation aimed at combating violent street crime. The report, released on 15 October, documented serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances carried out by the PNC between November 2013 and February 2014. Embassy officials raised concerns at a senior level, including with the DRC Minister of the Interior, about the allegations made in the report.

Given the seriousness of the allegations, and following the UNJHRO report, the UK suspended its bilateral Security Sector Accountability and Police Reform programme in November. We pressed for a full and transparent investigation into the Likofi allegations and the responsible officers to be suspended. Efforts to stabilise the DRC require a reformed army, police, and justice sector that can provide effective security across the whole country. It is crucial that the security sector operates under democratic control and follows the rule of law.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

Conflict in the DRC continued to take a significant toll on the population in 2014, leading to widespread death and displacement, food insecurity, and the destruction of homes and livelihoods. Of the estimated 77 million residents of the DRC, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that more than 2.7 million people were internally displaced. In addition, over 442,000 had found refuge in neighbouring countries. Insecurity was compounded by a lack of access to basic services, and a significant reduction in harvests. Over 50% of the total figure of internally displaced persons (IDPs) came from just two regions of eastern the DRC: North and South Kivu. The lack of basic services and infrastructure in these regions of eastern the DRC was exacerbated by the enormous humanitarian needs caused by ongoing conflict.

Over 40 armed groups continued to commit human rights abuses in eastern DRC. The rise in attacks on civilians by armed groups across the year was deeply troubling. In the latter part of 2014, there were major attacks on villages in Beni territory. MONUSCO subsequently significantly increased its presence in the Beni area in an attempt to protect civilians more effectively. We made a statement condemning the attacks, which left

over 200 dead, and calling for those responsible to be held to account.

The UK continued to lobby for the perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations to be brought to justice. In March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) convicted Germain Katanga, a former rebel leader transferred to the ICC by the DRC government in 2007, of one crime against humanity (murder) and four war crimes (murder, attacking a civilian population, destruction of property, and pillaging) committed in February 2003 during an attack on the village of Bogoro, in Ituri district. Katanga was acquitted of other charges, including of sexual violence, as personal culpability could not be proved.

Women's Rights

SGBV remained extremely prevalent in the DRC in 2014, perpetrated by both civilian and military actors. Violence against women and girls is strongly linked to gender inequalities and socio-cultural norms, and is tied up with strong ideas about masculinity, the breakdown of traditional structures, and the militarisation of society. In order to tackle this, the culture of impunity must be addressed. In May, a military court in Goma ruled on cases against 39 Congolese soldiers charged with rape and other serious crimes committed in Minova in November 2012. Despite reports of over 100 victims, only two soldiers were convicted of rape.

The UK remained fully committed to playing a full part in efforts to end SGBV in the DRC. At the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence, a specially convened DRC Country Forum reconfirmed the DRC's commitment to tackling SGBV. Another key success was the launch of work on the first Action Plan for the Congolese Army on tackling Sexual Violence. This was a significant step, particularly given that a UN report issued in April estimated that the DRC's Armed Forces were responsible for over a third of the rapes committed in the eastern part of the country. President Kabila's appointment in July of Jeanine Mabunda as his Personal Representative for Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment was also a welcome development. Ms Mabunda committed to working with Congolese groups, the international community, and others to address SGBV in the DRC comprehensively, and drew up a strategic plan to bring together work on the issue. 2014 saw two critical gender gaps filled in MONUSCO with the appointment of a Senior Gender Adviser to the Sexual Violence Unit, funded by the Netherlands, and a Gender Field Adviser/Child Protection Officer, seconded from the British Army.

In November, General Jerome Kakwavu became the first Congolese general to be successfully prosecuted for rape, and was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. In December, Lieutenant Colonel Engangela, also known as "Colonel 106", was sentenced to life imprisonment by a military tribunal in South Kivu for crimes against humanity committed between 2005 and 2007 in eastern DRC. This included a sentence of 20 years for rape. The EU issued a statement, on behalf of member states, recognising the important step that the verdict represented, and commending the DRC on progress made in the fight against impunity.

We held meetings with a range of women's rights groups across the DRC. June saw the formal launch of The UK National

Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, designed to strengthen the UK's ability to reduce the impact of conflict on women and girls, and to promote their inclusion in conflict resolution. The Implementation Plan published in December, contained detailed information about the activities that we will be pursuing under each of the pillars of the NAP in the DRC.

2014 saw other significant milestones in the fight against impunity. In June, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber confirmed charges of 13 counts of war crimes and five counts of crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, and sexual slavery, against Bosco Ntaganda, the former rebel leader, who remains in custody awaiting trial. In December, the ICC Appeals Chamber upheld the previous decision of the Trial Chamber to convict militia leader Thomas Lubanga to 14 years for the war crimes of recruiting child soldiers, and using them in conflict. The significance of the verdict in the Lubanga case was referred to in a statement by the Foreign & Commonwealth (FCO) Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay. The verdict was a powerful reminder that those who commit war crimes will be held accountable for their actions; it also represented the first ever final judgement of the Appeals Chamber.

Children's Rights

We remained fully committed to ending the recruitment and deployment of child soldiers and to protecting children affected by armed conflict. Following the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, the then FCO Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, hosted a roundtable discussion with the then DRC Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs, Luba Ntambo, and then DRC Gender Minister, Inagosi, to discuss progress on the children and armed conflict agenda. The discussion provided an opportunity to review and share experiences of countries that have successfully put an end to the practice. The DRC ministers voiced their commitment to end child recruitment, and to implement the DRC's National Action Plan.

We supported a project, led by War Child, to run a helpline to support vulnerable children affected by conflict and insecurity in eastern DRC. The aim of the project was to reduce the number of children being recruited by armed groups, while helping them successful to re-integrate into society following demobilisation.

Other Issues

In October it came to light that over 100 demobilised combatants and their dependents had died in a remote "disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration" (DDR) camp in Kotakoli, Equateur province, after officials failed to provide adequate food and health care. Human Rights Watch researchers alleged that 42 demobilised combatants and at least five women and 57 children died at the camp since being moved there in December 2013. The DRC government expressed regret for the deaths at Kotakoli, and highlighted that provision of supplies to the camp was hindered by the remoteness of the area, which is almost inaccessible by road. We lobbied the DRC government at a senior level for a full and thorough investigation into what happened at Kotakoli and for the camp to be closed and the individuals relocated to a

more accessible location. We also supported the issuing of a statement by the President of the UN Security Council on 3 October referring to the obligation on the DRC government to guarantee humane conditions in all DDR camps.

In December, local authorities in North Kivu began a programme to close internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and encourage inhabitants to return home. This led to residents of these camps being forced to leave makeshift shelters, which were subsequently destroyed.

Whilst we recognise the government's right to close camps, closures must be undertaken in a way that reflects the DRC's obligations under the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention). This includes the respect of humanitarian principles and the rights and dignity of the IDPs affected, including the right to voluntary return. We worked closely with the wider humanitarian community to support an ongoing dialogue with the DRC on this issue. We hope that the dialogue led by OCHA and the UN Refugee Agency can be maintained in order to identify long-term solutions for those currently located in camps around Goma and across North Kivu.

Eritrea

For much of 2014, Eritrea continued to fall short of domestic implementation of its international human rights commitments. It did not cooperate fully with international human rights bodies and made no progress in implementing its 1997 constitution, which provides for democratic government and fundamental rights and freedoms. However, in the latter part of the year the Eritrean government took some positive steps in its engagement with the international community on human rights. It participated in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). There remained serious shortcomings in the rule of law, reports of arbitrary and inhumane detention, and limits on media freedom and freedom of speech.

In 2014, the UK worked with our partners in the EU and other international fora to urge Eritrea to improve its performance on human rights. We used all opportunities to urge the Eritrean government to work constructively with the international community, including the UN system, and to implement rapidly the recommendations of the UPR, which took place in February. We made some progress through this engagement. The UK was a member of the working group on the UPR process, which made 200 recommendations to the Eritrean government. These included: urging Eritrea to ratify a number of international human rights conventions; calling for full implementation of its constitution; amending or abolishing its national service system; and cooperating with international human rights bodies. In June, Eritrea presented its response, in which it accepted 92 recommendations. The Foreign Minister of Eritrea informed international representatives in Asmara in September that the Eritrean government had established a cross-departmental mechanism to implement fully the recommendations it had accepted, and to consider the possibility of implementing others.

Domestically, Eritrea made no progress in implementing the constitution ratified by its National Assembly in 1997. Instead, the President announced at National Day celebrations on 24 May that Eritrea would begin the process of drafting a new constitution. Without the implementation of the constitution Eritrea remains a one-party state. There is no private or independent media; there are constraints on free practice of religion; and the rule of law remains arbitrary, with the judiciary weak and liable to be circumvented through informal and extrajudicial forms of justice. There remain numerous reports of individuals who have been detained extrajudicially for long periods for political reasons.

In 2015, the UK will continue to pursue our existing human rights objectives in Eritrea given the ongoing and significant shortcomings in domestic observance of international human rights commitments. We will support the new African Union (AU)-EU Khartoum Process, in which Eritrea is a participant, to tackle forced migration and human trafficking. Through the process, we will support development programmes in Eritrea and continue to stress the link between improving human rights and the achievement of Eritrea's development goals. We will continue to urge Eritrea to cooperate with multilateral

bodies to tackle the scourge of human trafficking, and offer practical support for Eritrea's anti-human trafficking and victim protection efforts. We will continue to support the work of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) into human rights in Eritrea, which the HRC voted to establish in June. In September, three members to the COI were appointed: Mike Smith (Australia), Sheila Keetharuth (Mauritius), and Victor Dankwa (Ghana). In early 2015, we will support the COI's information-gathering visit to the UK, during which it will meet with representatives of Eritrean diaspora groups.

Elections

Eritrea is a one-party state. The constitution, ratified in 1997, provides for an elected National Assembly. Although the constitution has not formally been applied in practice, it is used as the basis for legislation.

There have been no national elections since independence in 1993. Regional elections, which should have taken place in 2009, have yet to be held.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

The government of Eritrea controls all domestic media outlets and requires all publications to be approved. The latest Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index ranked Eritrea last out of 180 countries for the seventh successive year. It reported that at least 28 journalists are behind bars. Eleven journalists are reported to have been detained since 2001, seven of whom are reported to have died. Provisions in Eritrean law and the unimplemented constitution enshrining the right to peaceful assembly and association are not respected in practice. Permits are required for public gatherings of more than seven people. Although officially there are no local, private or independent media, there are no constraints on public access to international radio or satellite television, although the latter requires subscription. These enjoy widespread market penetration. Access to the internet is constrained more by infrastructure and capacity rather than censorship. However, all internet service providers are required to use government-controlled internet infrastructure.

Eritreans continue to face restrictions both on movement inside the country and on holding a passport and foreign travel. Foreigners, including diplomats, require travel permits to leave Asmara.

Human Rights Defenders

No active human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or groups operate in Eritrea. The government does not permit human rights groups to visit the country. Civil society is tightly controlled, with no effective and fully independent civil society groups. We are not aware of any reports of arrests of human rights defenders; however, Eritrea's refusal to allow human rights groups to operate, or to publish details of any arrests, makes this impossible to corroborate.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

The judicial system in Eritrea is opaque and often harsh. It suffers from weak capacity and from being circumvented through informal and extrajudicial forms of justice applied

by state agents. When trials do occur they are conducted in secret, often in special courts where judges also serve as prosecutors and the accused have no access to defence counsel. Reports of arbitrary, indefinite and incommunicado imprisonment without trial remain common. The number of those in detention on political or religious grounds is unknown. The government does not allow access to most of its prisons and there are no accurate figures on the number of prisoners. Eritrea continues to hold a number of Djiboutian prisoners of war, captured during the 2008 border conflict, without access from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The UK continued in 2014 to urge the Eritrean government to release all prisoners held for their political or religious beliefs. As in previous years, the then EU High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission, Baroness Ashton, published a declaration on political prisoners in Eritrea on behalf of the EU on 18 September, the thirteenth anniversary of the detention without trial of a group of 11 Eritrean members of parliament (the G-11) and 10 journalists who had called for democratic reform.

Death Penalty

There were no reports of the death penalty being used in 2014. With EU partners, the UK continued to lobby Eritrea on the death penalty as part of the Article 8 Dialogue on human rights, which took place in Asmara in January. On 18 December, Eritrea voted in favour of the biennial UN General Assembly resolution calling for a moratorium on use of the death penalty – the first time it had done so.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

The UK and our EU partners welcomed Eritrea's ratification of the CAT in September. Despite this, Eritrea continued to deny access to political and religious prisoners by family members and human rights organisations, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea was not able to visit the country.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment has been asking to visit Eritrea since 2005. Since 2009, the government has not responded either to any written requests for information nor to the outstanding visit requests.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

As of December, there were 2,902 refugees and asylum seekers in Eritrea, of which 2,764 were Somalis, with additional numbers from Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan. Most refugees have been in Eritrea for nearly two decades but are not yet sufficiently recognised by domestic legislation. The Eritrean government works closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure adequate provision of education and healthcare, and to find a durable solution for the refugees. The Eritrean government does not operate a system of forced repatriations, but works with UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to return those who express a desire to return to their country of origin, and cooperates on arrangements for the departure of those offered settlement in third countries.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Eritrean constitution enshrines the right to practise any religion. In practice, only four traditional religious organisations (Orthodox Christian, Sunni Muslim, Catholic, and the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Eritrea) have official approval to operate. There are reports that a number of practitioners of other religions have been detained, including 56 Jehovah's Witnesses detained for their refusal, on grounds of conscience, to perform national service. The UK has called for the release of elderly and sick religious detainees.

Women's Rights

Women in Eritrea are well-protected by law but still face challenges due to cultural attitudes and lack of economic opportunities. The UK is disappointed that Eritrea has not endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Female genital mutilation is illegal and the incidence of it has been significantly reduced with the active support of a government campaign, but it continues to be practised among some groups and in some areas. The Eritrean government has implemented programmes to support the mainly female heads of households in rural communities, improving livelihoods and access to water and sanitation. The UK supports multilateral initiatives, including the work of UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on maternal health.

Minority Rights

The Eritrean government recognises nine official ethnic groups in Eritrea. Of these, the Tigrinya is politically and culturally dominant. Representatives of other groups have complained of discrimination and violation of their rights. Relations between the government and the Kunama and Afar, in particular, remain tense.

Children's rights

Children's rights are comparatively well-protected by law, but implementation is hampered by cultural attitudes and resource constraints. Child labour below the age of 14 is illegal but occurs in rural areas. The Eritrean government has continued to build new schools and to expand education to rural and nomadic communities, working in partnership with UNICEF, including by supporting programmes to integrate the children of semi-nomadic and nomadic families into mainstream education. But provision of schools and teachers falls short of requirements at all levels.

LGBT Rights

Same-sex activity is a crime in Eritrea and there is no anti-discrimination legislation to protect LGBT individuals. The Eritrean government has told us that they do not intend to change this situation.

Other Issues

Military service

Proclamation 82 of 1995 provides for all eligible Eritrean citizens to perform eighteen months of national service, which in recent practice has been either military or civilian in nature. Following the outbreak of war with Ethiopia in 1998, the

government extended the period of national service to an undetermined length for each individual, with demobilisation dependent on individual circumstance. Some individuals have continued to perform national service for several years. However, the Eritrean government reports that it has informed members of the most recent intake that their period of service will not extend beyond eighteen months. Civilian national service has often included work for government and state-owned companies on low salaries, exposing the government to the allegation of using forced labour. The government has also reported informally that current and future intakes of national service members will be required only to perform military and not civilian service. Obligatory national service continues to be a major driver for emigration and illegal migration.

Migration and human trafficking

Irregular migration from Eritrea grew in 2014. According to estimates from UNHCR, more than 4,000 Eritreans left the country every month in much of 2014. The accurate migration figure may be much higher, as many migrants do not register. Illegal migrants risk perilous journeys and abuse at the hands of ruthless human trafficking gangs. The UK is a core member of the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative (“Khartoum Process”) through which we will work with EU partners to develop, implement and fund concrete projects in the areas of migration, border management, and law enforcement to help reduce the risks of human trafficking. Bilaterally and with the EU, we continued to press the Eritrean government to address the underlying causes of the exodus, including the prolonged national service obligation and the lack of economic opportunity, especially for young people.

Development programmes

Throughout 2014, we continued to support the four-year cooperation agreement between the Eritrean government and the UN, which covers a number of key development areas. The EU was also able to restart its European Development Fund programme in Eritrea. Implementation of both programmes is going well. International representatives who have made field visits to development projects agree they are run well and accountably, and are having real impact. The UN assesses that Eritrea is one of the few countries in Africa making steady progress towards achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals on the reduction of child and maternal mortality, and combating HIV/AIDS. It is also making progress on environmental sustainability. However, much remains to be done, especially on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, and attainment of universal primary education.

Iraq

The human rights situation in Iraq deteriorated significantly over the course of 2014. This was due primarily to the advance of ISIL into northern and western Iraq, and the widespread and systematic abuses which ISIL fighters perpetrated against the civilian population. The UN estimates that 2.1 million people were displaced in Iraq in 2014, causing what the UN declared to be a humanitarian emergency of the highest level. In addition, ISIL fighters perpetrated extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, targeted persecution of religious groups, abduction of women, forced displacement, and the recruitment of child soldiers. For further information on the human rights situation in areas under ISIL control, see Chapter VI.

The situation of women, children and religious minorities remained a particular concern. Likewise, there continued to be significant and systemic problems with the administration of justice across the country. These included reliance on confession-based convictions, the use of torture to obtain these confessions, poor detention standards, and a continued reliance on the death penalty, particularly for terrorism offences. There were also concerns around the performance of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and police, and the role and conduct of Shia militias. Iraq’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) took place at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on 3 November. This focused primarily on the current security situation and highlighted the progress that had been made over the last four years on the human rights agenda, including on the rights of children and persons with disabilities. Concerns raised by numerous UN member states included the death penalty, the use of torture, the situation of minorities, Iraq’s declining to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and women’s rights.

Human rights remained a key part of our engagement with the Iraqi government in 2014. Progress on our priorities was, however, slow. This was due partly to the advance of ISIL, but also reflected the failure of previous Iraqi administrations to govern inclusively and protect human rights, which contributed to ISIL’s rise. We continued to encourage the Iraqi government to act together against the threat posed by ISIL, to protect all Iraqi citizens and promote the rule of law.

The UK is part of a coalition of more than 60 countries supporting the Iraqi government in its fight against ISIL, and Royal Air Force strikes are assisting Iraqi ground forces. Pushing back ISIL is key to protecting civilians and enabling internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes. The UK has been clear that, to be effective, efforts to tackle terrorism should build support from local communities, and require an effective justice system that respects human rights. We co-sponsored a resolution at the HRC on 1 September which was passed by consensus. It mandated the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to despatch a mission to investigate and report on ISIL abuses in Iraq. Through the Department for International Development (DFID), we are one of the largest bilateral donors supporting the humanitarian crisis. DFID has supported vulnerable populations displaced by the conflict, including funding specifically designed to support women and children.

We welcomed the formation of a unity government whose aims are to be inclusive and representative. This is a crucial step to addressing the challenges facing Iraq and to promoting human rights within the country; the Iraqi government must continue this commitment to inclusivity in 2015. We will continue working with the new government to support all Iraqi citizens, particularly in the fight against ISIL. In 2015 we will focus on combating violence against women and preventing sexual violence in conflict. We will also be engaging on the rule of law and promoting freedom of religion or belief. In addition, we are investigating how we can support the implementation of recommendations from the UPR, particularly building capacity within the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights to ensure it is an independent and effective monitoring body.

Elections

Parliamentary elections were held on 30 April. Despite the difficult security situation, the elections took place on time and saw over 60% voter turn-out. It was a genuinely competitive election, with a 25% increase in the number of candidates since 2010. There was general consensus that the elections process went well, although there were some complaints of vote-buying and other irregularities. Attacks on campaign rallies in the run-up to the elections and at polling centres may have prevented some people from exercising their right to vote. Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission announced the preliminary results on 19 May with no one party having a clear majority. An inclusive and representative government was formed on 18 October, with the appointment of the Ministers of Interior and Defence and the swearing in of six Kurdish federal ministers.

The Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, welcomed the formation of a unity government as a crucial milestone on the way to addressing the serious security, political and humanitarian challenges facing Iraq.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Iraq remained one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists to operate in, and media professionals were frequently faced with violence and intimidation, not least from ISIL. While Iraq enjoys a more pluralistic press than other countries in the region, many media outlets are aligned to specific religious or political groups, and the authorities continue to exercise control over how and what the press report. In a speech delivered in a conference held by the Communications and Media Commission on freedom of expression, Speaker Saleem al Juboori pledged to prevent any legislation that may lead to a restriction on freedom of expression, especially in relation to auditory, visual and print media. Despite this, reports of media staff being banned from entering the Council of Representatives or attending conferences continued.

We continued to highlight the importance of a free press in a democratic society. Our Ambassador in Baghdad highlighted the role of the media and the importance of freedom of expression in an interview to mark World Press Freedom Day.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Corruption remained widespread with Transparency International ranking Iraq 170 out of 175 in its 2014 Corruption Perception Index. Lack of capacity within the judicial system and a continued reliance on confessions to secure convictions contributed to the inefficient administration of justice. Criminal investigations and judicial proceedings frequently failed fully to respect and protect international and constitutional guarantees of due process and fair trial standards. There remained a lack of transparency and reports continued of people detained arbitrarily and without access to legal counsel. Distrust of the police remained prevalent, particularly within the Sunni population.

We funded a community policing project which aimed to make a substantial and practical contribution to developing an Iraqi police force that works with the community, is professional and accountable, and observes human rights, including women's rights and rule of law. The project began in just one governorate but, over 2014, spread to three. Its success is evidenced by the reaction of the local communities, who now say they trust the police force, and also by the fact that Iraq is taking forward the funding to ensure the community policing boards set up by the project continue. In addition, we funded a conflict resolution project through Mercy Corps, which developed a network of individuals trained to manage conflicts. This network continues to grow. In 2014, the project helped resolve conflicts all over Iraq, on issues ranging from land ownership to crimes of retribution.

Death Penalty

Iraq continued to apply the death penalty, and the Minister of Human Rights and other government officials have publicly supported it as a legitimate response to terrorist violence. During the UPR, the delegation stated that the current situation with ISIL meant that it was unlikely to abolish the death penalty at present. However, a department within the Ministry of Human Rights will be looking at the use of the death penalty to ensure it is restricted to only the most serious crimes. The UN reported at least 62 people executed in 2014. This included several mass executions, for example 26 people on 19 January, and 11 on 23 January. There were also serious concerns about the transparency of death penalty cases. The unofficial moratorium on the use of the death penalty, imposed by the Kurdistan Regional Government in 2008, remained in place.

We frequently raised our concerns about Iraq's continued use of the death penalty; during the UPR we made a recommendation that they establish a moratorium on executions and move towards abolition.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

The government of Iraq has implemented a number of measures to ensure compliance with international commitments on torture, through training courses for those working in the Ministry of Justice and law enforcement. Human rights are also taught in police academies and institutions. However, we continued to receive reports of the mistreatment of suspects in detention and prisons, for example confessions obtained by torture, and the extrajudicial killing of prisoners

accused of terrorism offences. In February, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report on the treatment of women in Iraqi detention facilities. The report claimed that many women were detained illegally for months or even years without trial, and were routinely tortured and threatened with sexual abuse. Allegations of torture and forced confession were often dismissed by judges. The UN Special Rapporteur on torture will visit Iraq in 2015, and the Iraqi government has set up a committee to assist with the visit.

In December, on the fifth anniversary of his arrest, Amnesty International (AI) again called for the release of Ramze Ahmed, a dual British/Iraqi national detained in Iraq. In 2012, after a 15-minute trial where his lawyer was not allowed to speak, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison for terrorism-related offences. We remained concerned about his conviction, including allegations of the use of torture to obtain evidence, and further reports of torture during his detention. We continued to provide consular assistance, and to raise this case and allegations of torture with the Iraqi government.

During the UPR we recommended that the Iraqi government should ensure the equitable treatment of all people through an improved justice system and increased respect for human rights within the police and security forces, including the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

Civilians suffered enormously in the conflict with ISIL throughout 2014. The advance of ISIL led to widespread displacement and, in turn, this caused a humanitarian crisis. Along with widespread reports of ISIL abuses, reports from AI and HRW alleged that Shia militias perpetrated human rights abuses against civilians, particularly against Sunnis. These included abductions, killings and extortion. There were also reports of ISF committing human rights violations, including the use of barrel bombs and shelling in civilian areas. Prime Minister Abadi's commitment to the creation of a National Guard, which would bring militia groups under government control, and reform of the ISF, including the dismissal of commanders for corruption, are signs that the Iraqi government is addressing these reports. However, the Iraqi government must hold those responsible for human rights abuses to account, and gather more documentation. Civil society activists continued to be at risk, with reports of disappearances and killings; for example the killing of Saad Abdul Wahab Ahmed, a civil society activist, by unidentified gunmen.

The humanitarian situation in Iraq severely deteriorated in 2014 with the displacement of an estimated 2.1 million people. In addition, the UN estimates that 2.2 million people in areas controlled by ISIL and affiliated armed groups are in urgent need of aid and are, with few exceptions, beyond the reach of humanitarian partners. The UK is supporting the international humanitarian effort and has pledged £39.5 million. This funding is providing shelter, winter supplies, food, water, sanitation and medical care to thousands of displaced families, as well as services to protect vulnerable civilians, such as legal assistance and support groups for women.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

The situation for religious groups, including Muslims, Christians, Yazidis and others, remained deeply concerning. ISIL committed numerous atrocities against religious groups and persecuted individuals and communities on the basis of their religion or belief. While the Iraqi government made commitments to protect all Iraqis, more needs to be done to protect vulnerable groups and to enable them to return to their homes in areas re-taken from ISIL. This is particularly difficult where victims' neighbours have allegedly been complicit in persecution. Although the situation for religious minorities deteriorated since the advance of ISIL, many individuals had already left Iraq as a result of persecution since 2003. This is an issue that the Iraqi government must address. While freedom of religion or belief is protected by the constitution, in practice this is often not the case.

We condemned persecution on the grounds of religion or belief and engaged with religious leaders both in the UK and in Iraq. We funded a series of grassroots meetings among religious leaders in Iraq to promote religious tolerance and freedom of religion or belief. We also encouraged influential religious leaders in Iraq to speak out publicly and condemn sectarian violence.

Women's Rights

It is clear that ISIL is using sexual violence as a tool to spread terror among communities. This includes rape, abduction, forced marriage, sexual slavery, sex trafficking, and other forms of sexual assault. There is also anecdotal evidence of other armed groups, including militia linked to the government, perpetrating sexual violence. However, this appears to be largely opportunistic rather than as the result of specific strategies. Displaced women and girls are also vulnerable in and outside internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. They are exposed to increased levels of domestic violence, and there have been reports of sexual harassment, organised prostitution and sex trafficking. Attitudes on sexual violence remain a serious obstacle to tackling the issue. Reporting these forms of violence brings shame to the individual, the family and the wider community, often with tragic results, including so-called honour killings, suicide, or the survivor being forced to marry the perpetrator.

Discriminatory laws, like the draft Personal Status Law approved by the Council of Ministers on 25 February, remain a barrier to women's rights. This law would create inequality between citizens before the law. While the draft is not expected to go forward to parliament, its approval is worrying.

From 7-14 November, the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) conducted a joint scoping mission with the Canadian government. This aimed to understand better the scale of the issue and the services being provided, thus informing UK and Canadian policy and programming.

Our Embassy continued to work with women's groups to promote women's rights, setting up two working groups – one focused on female MPs and the other on young women. The aim of the groups is to improve women's access to employment and the political process, and to combat the effects of sexual violence.

Minority Rights

The situation for minorities has deteriorated in the wake of ISIL's advance. ISIL has committed atrocities against minorities such as the Turkmen community, forcing thousands to flee their homes. On 22 December, the Iraqi Minister for Human Rights hosted an event focused on the need to bring together minorities. This was a positive step, but much more remains to be done to protect vulnerable communities.

Children's Rights

There were reports of children being abducted by ISIL and trained as soldiers or used as suicide bombers. Large numbers of children were displaced and others lost family members as a result of recent violence. Displaced children continued to suffer from the psychological trauma of conflict, and access to education and development opportunities were severely limited. Schools in the Kurdistan Region were used as housing for IDPs, resulting in a delayed start to the school year in some governorates, and many children not being able to attend lessons.

UK humanitarian assistance in Iraq included activities specifically focused on protecting vulnerable displaced children, such as the provision of psychosocial support and safe spaces to play.

Other Issues

Camp Liberty

Over 2,500 Iranian nationals remain in Camp Liberty, with the final group transferring from Camp Ashraf in September 2013. Residents are being assessed for refugee status by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with a view to being relocated to third countries. We have agreed to consider, exceptionally, whether 52 residents previously settled in the UK, but who left the UK many years ago, should be re-admitted. The Home Office has agreed to the re-admission of the 17 residents so far referred by the UNHCR.

We support UN calls for more to be done to protect the residents of Camp Liberty but, in common with international partners, remain of the view that the Iraqi government, as the sovereign government, is responsible for security at the camp. In all of our engagement with the Iraqi government on this issue, we have emphasised that it is their responsibility to ensure the safety of the residents at Camp Liberty.

Our Embassy in Baghdad continues to monitor the situation; the UN's overall assessment of the camp is that the provision of life support systems, such as water, electricity, and food, are well in excess of basic humanitarian standards.

Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran's human rights record remained cause for great concern in 2014. Although President Rouhani pledged his support for greater social equality and justice for all Iranians there was little change in practice, and much more needs to be done to ensure all Iranians enjoy the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled. There was a marked increase in the number of executions over the past year, and Iran continued to have the highest rate of executions per capita in the world, according to UN figures, and the second highest number of journalists in prison in the world. Dissent was not widely tolerated, and the majority of newspapers, TV and radio in Iran remained government controlled. Access to the internet and social media was heavily restricted. Cyber activists, internet experts, bloggers and activists are routinely arrested and detained. Women continued to suffer discrimination, and there was continued persecution of religious and ethnic minorities.

The UK remained at the forefront of international efforts to encourage the Iranian government to take steps to improve its human rights record. We continued to raise individual cases with the Iranian government, and address trends such as the increase in executions and the persecution of religious minorities. In October, the UK contributed to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Iran's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva. We raised concerns about the increased use of the death penalty, and restrictions on freedom of religion or belief; freedom of expression; due process, such as access to a lawyer; and women's rights. The UK also tabled two recommendations which would make an important contribution to improving Iran's approach to human rights: an immediate moratorium on the execution of juveniles and those who have committed crimes not recognised as "most serious"; and allowing detainees access to a lawyer at all stages of pre-trial detention. Iran is expected to respond to these recommendations before the next HRC in March 2015.

On 18 December, for the 11th consecutive year, a resolution was passed at the UN in support of human rights in Iran. The resolution was passed with 83 countries voting in support and 35 countries voting against. The UK co-sponsored this resolution, and lobbied extensively for support. The UK also lobbied successfully for the renewal of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Dr Ahmed Shaheed, at the HRC in March.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

President Rouhani's comments in March in favour of "freedom of the press, with responsibility", where he stated that "if we break the pens and shut the mouths, public trust will be deeply harmed... Shutting down a newspaper should be a last resort, not the first", were welcome. However, systemic restrictions on freedom of expression by various organs of the Iranian state continued. A number of newspapers were shut down in 2014, including Aseman and Bahar newspapers, which were closed for "propaganda against the regime" and similar related charges. Despite several government officials making statements in support of greater press freedom, Iran continued to imprison journalists at an alarming rate, and many others continued to face alleged harassment and surveillance.

Prison conditions remained a serious concern in 2014. On 17 April, it was widely reported in the Iranian media that a number of political prisoners in Ward 350 of Evin Prison were severely beaten by prison guards, stripped naked, threatened to be raped, and taken to solitary confinement. Iranian officials claimed that only a few prisoners were slightly injured during a routine search of the ward. However, families of the prisoners involved claimed that four prisoners had to be sent to hospital outside of the prison compound for treatment after the attack. Several more had to be treated in the prison infirmary, and at least 32 were taken to solitary confinement.

The issue of freedom of expression and assembly was brought to the forefront of international attention in May, when a group of young Iranians were arrested after uploading a video to YouTube of them dancing on Tehran's rooftops to Pharrell Williams' song "Happy". The individuals were arrested because the men and women were dancing together, and the women had uncovered hair. Their arrests caused an international outcry. The "Happy Dancers", as they became known, were released from prison a day after their arrest, but on 19 September they were handed suspended sentences of one year in prison and 91 lashes each.

There have, however, been signs of increased internal discourse within Iran on these issues over 2014, particularly on the question of blocking social media. In April, it was announced that the social media applications WhatsApp, Viber and Tango would be filtered in Iran. However, following this, there was an ongoing debate between government ministries over whether these applications should be filtered. In October, Information and Communications Minister Mahmoud Vaezi asked that people "use the networks wisely so that people can continue to use them in future".

Human Rights Defenders

Hundreds of human rights defenders and political prisoners continued to be detained in Iran, and there were reports of further arrests in 2014. Many individuals were detained on charges such as "membership in organisations that aim to disrupt national security", or "propaganda against the system".

In March, student human rights activist Maryam Shafipour was sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of "spreading propaganda" and "gathering and colluding" against the ruling system. She was kept in solitary confinement for two months without access to a lawyer before being charged. After an appeal in May, she was sentenced to four years in prison. While in prison, Ms Shafipour reportedly developed a range of medical problems, but was denied treatment outside the prison compound, despite repeated requests.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

There was little or no improvement in access to justice or the rule of law in Iran during 2014. While the Iranian government noted that the constitution safeguards the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, there were allegations and reports of influence over judges. According to the UN Special Rapporteur, the Special Assistant to the President for Ethnic and Religious Minority Affairs said in February that "we have witnessed the security apparatus, from the position of

strength, putting the judge under pressure to steer the trial in the direction they want".

The UN reported that many lawyers believed that judges made their decisions almost exclusively on the basis of reports submitted by the arresting and investigating officials, and rarely considered evidence offered by the defence. One high-profile example of this in 2014 was the trial of 26-year-old Iranian woman, Reyhaneh Jabbari, who was found guilty of the murder of a former intelligence officer who was trying to sexually assault her. According to Amnesty International, Ms Jabbari's claims that there was a second man present at the time of the assault and murder were not fully investigated. Ms Jabbari was executed on 25 October, to much public outcry.

Death Penalty

The use of the death penalty in Iran continued to be of significant concern. There were at least 450 confirmed executions in Iran in 2014. The true figure was probably far higher, but reports of secret executions and a lack of clarity of official figures made it difficult to give an accurate number.

The death penalty was used largely for drugs-related offences, which are not considered the "most serious crimes" – the latter being the only type of crimes for which the death penalty is permitted under Iran's obligations as a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. There were also several cases of individuals being executed for crimes they committed as minors, in contravention of Iran's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mohamad Javad Larijani, Head of the Iranian Human Rights Committee, during an interview with France 24 TV Station on 8 December, said that Iran was trying to change the laws on drug trafficking, in which case "the number of executions in Iran would fall by 80%". The UK would welcome such a change to the laws on executions for drugs-related offences.

The use of the death penalty also became a point of internal debate within Iran during 2014. On 5 February, a man who had been sentenced to death for drug trafficking survived his hanging. When it was discovered that he had survived, there was a debate around whether he should be subjected to a second hanging. Justice Minister Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi opposed a second hanging, and ordered his sentence to be commuted to life imprisonment. On 15 April, a man convicted of murder was pardoned by the victim's mother just seconds before the execution was due to take place. These examples, plus many more, struck a chord with the Iranian people and sparked a lively internal debate about the use of the death penalty.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Iranian constitution recognises only three religions other than Islam: Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. There were some suggestions throughout 2014 that freedom of religion or belief might be improving. Former President and Expediency Council Chair Ali Akbar Hashemi Rasfajani told a meeting of Iranian Sunni Muslim leaders that their rights were secure in Iran. However, there was little, if any, actual change in the challenges faced by religious minorities in Iran.

The Baha'i community continued to be persecuted systematically in 2014. In late April, a prominent Baha'i cemetery in Shiraz was desecrated. Due to international outcry, the desecration was halted in May, but resumed again in August. 14 May marked the six-year anniversary of the imprisonment of the seven leaders of the Baha'i faith, who are serving 20 years each in prison on charges of espionage, "propaganda against the regime", "collusion and collaboration for the purpose of endangering the national security", and "spreading corruption on earth". The systematic persecution of the Baha'is appears to be rooted in the unrecognised status of the faith.

Although the Christian faith is recognised by the Iranian constitution, Christians, and especially Christian converts, continued to face harassment. Christians involved in the non-denominational house church movement were routinely arrested throughout 2014. In October, three Christian pastors, including Behnam Irani, were sentenced to an additional six years each in prison, on top of their original sentences, on charges of "action against national security", and "creating a network to overthrow the system". During an attack on a house church on Christmas Day, nine Christians were arrested, including the two priests who were conducting the church service.

Women's Rights

According to the UN Special Rapporteur's October report, Iranian women continued to constitute just 16% of the Iranian workforce. There was also a decrease in the percentage of female students entering university following the 2012 introduction of gender-rationing policies.

The wearing of the hijab was a notable issue in Iranian internal politics in 2014. In May, a Facebook page titled "My Stealthy Freedom" was set up by a prominent human rights activist, on which women in Iran posted photos of themselves in public places with uncovered hair. The page was hugely popular, with thousands of women posting photos, and became a symbol of female dissent against enforced wearing of the hijab. A number of months later, in October, there was a spate of acid attacks against women for not adhering to "proper Islamic dress". Whilst it was originally claimed on social media that the government was behind the attacks, it is now largely believed that there was a single attacker, working to his own agenda. A protest in Isfahan against the acid attacks reportedly resulted in riot police using tear gas and batons against the protestors.

Minority Rights

Discrimination and the arbitrary arrest of ethnic minorities continued throughout 2014. In January, there were reports that two activists from the Arab minority were executed in secret, after reportedly being denied access to lawyers, and forced into confessing to "enmity against God", and "corruption on earth", as well as acts against national security.

LGBT Rights

It is against Iranian law for people of the same sex to touch and kiss, and for people to cross-dress. Transsexuality has been legal in Iran since a fatwa was issued in 1987 by the

late Ayatollah Khomeini. However, there is still a great deal of social stigma attached to transsexual people who can only obtain legal documentation in their preferred gender if they have undergone gender reassignment surgery. This makes it difficult for those who do not want to undergo surgery to find employment, and access medical services and education.

Other Issues

Trade Unions

Article 26 of the Iranian constitution permits the establishment of political and craft associations (types of trade unions specifically mentioned in the Iranian constitution), provided that there are no violations of the principles of national unity, Islamic standards and the "foundations" of the Islamic Republic. However, several labour activists in Iran have been sentenced to spend years in prison for "acting against national security by establishing and/or being a member of groups opposed to the system". The Supreme Leader recommended there be "mutual respect" between employers and workers. But efforts to try and organise labour in Iran proved to be dangerous in practice.

On 1 May, International Labour Day, more than 25 workers were reportedly attacked and taken into custody following a peaceful gathering in front of the Labour Ministry in Tehran. It was reported that a number of those workers were severely beaten by security forces. This occurred on the same day that President Rouhani made a speech in which he stated that "Workers, through their free associations, should be able to voice their concerns to Labour Ministry officials in a more comfortable and clear manner".

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs)

Throughout 2014, the UK supported the United States-led push for a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; we were disappointed that greater progress was not made. We stand ready to assist the parties if negotiations resume.

We remained seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Israel and the OPTs in 2014. Our principal concerns related to the Israeli government's violation of international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of Israel's occupation of the OPTs. And we continued to have concerns about serious human rights abuses by Hamas.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza deteriorated significantly. The summer conflict left over 2,000 people dead, and more than 100,000 homeless, with 450,000 lacking access to clean water. To date, reconstruction has been insufficient.

The Israeli authorities continued with settlement expansion, reintroduced punitive demolitions of Palestinian property, and made little progress to ease restrictions on movement and access. Access to the Holy Sites in Jerusalem was restricted on several occasions, including the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount being closed to all faiths for the first time since 2000. There was also a lack of progress on the rights of minorities.

We continued to seek improvements in the treatment of Palestinians in detention, notably children. The Israeli authorities took some positive steps, including a change in procedure to use summonses in place of night-time arrests. We will push for these changes to be fully implemented and to encourage further changes in practice.

We continued to have concerns about breaches of human rights under Hamas, the de facto government rule in the Gaza Strip, particularly during the summer's conflict, with reports of the use of human shields and extrajudicial executions. We were also concerned by continued reports of mistreatment towards detainees by the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank.

In 2015, we will support genuine efforts towards a final resolution to the conflict. We will work for all sides to maintain calm, and take steps towards peace. We will continue to oppose any aspects of the Israeli occupation that violate human rights and humanitarian law. We will push for the cessation of construction of settlements, which the UK condemns in the strongest terms, maintenance of the status quo at Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount, and the necessary reconstruction and improved movement and access for Gaza.

Elections

Parliamentary and presidential elections in the OPTs remained overdue, and blocked by intense differences between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA). We welcomed the formation of a new technocratic government, but limited progress was made towards Palestinian reconciliation after the Gaza conflict.

Israel continued to hold free and fair democratic elections. We welcomed the Israeli authorities' increased efforts to address corruption allegations among some political parties.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Freedom of expression and assembly continued to be well-observed within Israel.

Within the OPTs, our long-standing concerns about Israel's policing of Palestinian protests remained. The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) frequently used shock grenades, tear gas and, increasingly, live fire to disperse crowds or respond to throwing of stones or Molotov cocktails.

On 10 December, Palestinian Minister Ziad Abu Ayn died following an incident at a Human Rights Day event. Video footage showed that Ayn was pushed in the chest and grasped around the throat by an Israeli soldier as the IDF dispersed the crowd. The circumstances of the incident continue to be investigated; initial autopsy results indicated that Ayn had an underlying health condition.

The Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) judged that continued internal Fatah-Hamas tensions negatively affected media freedoms. The positive 2013 trend reversed in 2014 both in the West Bank and Gaza, with violations including physical assault, detention, and interrogation.

Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)

Reports of Israeli security forces harassing Palestinian HRDs continued. We issued a statement of our concern at the imprisonment of Murad Shteiwi, arrested in April on charges of participating in and organising illegal demonstrations.

Hamas, the de facto government in Gaza, continued to target HRDs with accusations of collaborating with foreign countries.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

We were concerned about the continued use of administrative detention as common practice for Palestinian prisoners. According to international law, administrative detention should only be used when security concerns makes this absolutely necessary, and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure.

We were also concerned at the passing of Israeli legislation to allow force-feeding of prisoners on hunger strike.

All Palestinians, except residents of East Jerusalem, are subject to trial in Israeli military courts. Israeli settlers, who are citizens of Israel, are tried within Israeli civil courts. The UK was concerned by the lack of convictions against extremist Israeli settlers responsible for violence against Palestinians and Palestinian property.

Death Penalty

Israel abolished capital punishment in peacetime in 1954, excepting those responsible for Nazi war crimes. Israel's last execution was in 1962.

Although PA law permits the use of capital punishment, a moratorium has been in place since the end of 2009.

Hamas, the de facto government in Gaza, carried out 27 executions of alleged collaborators. Some executions were carried out after summary trials or without trials, so could be characterised as extrajudicial. EU member states condemned

these executions. The UK urges that the death penalty be abolished across the Palestinian Territories.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

We were concerned by reports of mistreatment of detainees by the PA security forces and Hamas, the de facto government in Gaza. According to the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights, there were 221 complaints of mistreatment by the PA security forces in 2014. 271 complaints were lodged against Hamas security forces in Gaza.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) alleged mistreatment of Palestinian detainees by the Israeli authorities during the arrest and interrogation processes.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

Three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped in the West Bank on 13 June, and their bodies found near Hebron on 30 June. On 2 July, a Palestinian teen was kidnapped and burnt alive. Following this, there was a significant increase in tensions and a worsening security situation, including intensive and indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas militants. Israel launched Operation Protective Edge on 8 July, with subsequent ground operations from 17 July, leading to 51 days of conflict, and a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The UK condemned the rocket attacks and stressed the need for de-escalation.

Throughout the hostilities, the UK was clear that Israel had a right to take action but needed to do so proportionately and minimise civilian casualties, in line with international humanitarian law. The Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, raised concerns about the number of casualties and humanitarian impact with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Lieberman, and PA President Abbas. Israeli forces initially withdrew from Gaza on 5 August. Following several attempts to negotiate a ceasefire and intermittent resummptions of violence, an open-ended ceasefire supported by all parties was agreed on 26 August.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2,131 Palestinians were killed, of whom 1,473 were identified as civilians, including 501 children and 257 women. There is a disparity between figures regarding the number of Palestinian civilians killed. 74 Israelis were also killed. At the height of the conflict, 292,000 people were sheltering in UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and government schools, set up as emergency shelters. In December, nearly four months after the end of the war, 19,000 internally displaced persons were living in UNRWA schools. The UK provided £19 million of emergency assistance during the conflict.

The UK played its full role, and attempted to secure a balanced resolution on Gaza at the emergency session of the UN Human Rights Council in July 2014. However, our view was that the resolution would not help achieve a lasting ceasefire and was fundamentally unbalanced. Whilst we remained deeply concerned by the bloodshed in Gaza, the UK joined other EU nations in abstaining in the vote. However, the UK encouraged all parties to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) mandated by this resolution, which we have said must be independent and balanced in its approach. The Israeli

authorities have launched a number of internal processes to investigate specific cases of engagement, which we are following closely.

In the last quarter of 2014, East Jerusalem and the West Bank saw an increase in violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police and several terrorist attacks.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Hamas, the de facto government in Gaza, continued to restrict religious freedom or belief. The practice of religions other than Islam is difficult. There continued to be reports of arrests and detentions of individuals who do not abide by Hamas' own strict interpretation of Islam.

Whilst freedom of religion or belief was broadly respected in Israel and the West Bank, there continued to be incidences of religious intolerance in 2014. Reports of attacks on holy sites in the region continued, including the vandalism of a number of Christian and Muslim holy sites in East Jerusalem, and a number of incidents of vandalism at synagogues. Officials at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv and British Consulate General in Jerusalem raised concerns about provocative acts, urging action be taken to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Due to Israeli movement and access restrictions, outside of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, access to the holy sites of Jerusalem, including al-Aqsa Mosque was heavily restricted. On 30 October, Israeli authorities closed the Haram al Sharif/ Temple Mount compound to all faiths for the first time since 2000, in response to an unstable security situation, including the shooting of a prominent US-Israeli Jewish activist.

The closure of Al Aqsa sparked a series of violent incidents and increased tensions in Jerusalem, including sporadic clashes at the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount, and a number of terrorist incidents around the city, including an attack by Palestinians from East Jerusalem on a synagogue in West Jerusalem. This left four worshippers dead, including a dual British-Israeli citizen. The UK urged both sides to reinstate calm, and encouraged Israeli security forces to avoid unnecessary use of force in its responses.

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Women's Rights

We continued to have serious concerns about the suppression of women's rights in Gaza; Hamas, the de facto government, increased the number of Islamic restrictions imposed on Gazan life.

The UK welcomed the government of Israel's efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights, and implementation of existing legislation that addresses domestic and sexual violence against women and girls. Israel was a committed supporter of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, launched in May 2014, and endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The UK continued to support PA efforts to address concerns about discrimination against women and domestic violence.

We continued to have serious concerns about the suppression of women's rights in Gaza; the Hamas-led government increased the number of Islamic restrictions imposed on Gazan life.

Minority Rights

The Arab-Israeli minority continued to lag behind Israel's Jewish population in income, education, and standard of living. We welcomed the efforts by the Israeli government to address areas of inequality and discrimination between Jews and Arabs in Israel, but remained concerned by a climate of intolerance. An advisor on minority affairs sits in the office of the Prime Minister.

The UK closely followed the debate around the issue of unresolved Bedouin land claims and unrecognised Bedouin villages in the Negev. We encouraged the equal treatment of all of Israel's citizens under the law.

We had strong concerns about the development of Israeli plans to relocate Bedouin communities living in the strategic "E1" area in Area C of the West Bank to a township near Jericho. Plans for the new townships were deposited for public objection in August. If approved, this could result in the removal of 7,000 Bedouin in and around E1. The UN stated that such a move could be considered the forcible transfer of a protected population, a grave breach of the fourth Geneva Convention.

LGB&T Rights

We welcomed the fact that Israel continued to provide a safe environment for the LGB&T community. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv marched together with 150,000 people in the annual Tel Aviv Gay Pride Parade, and our Ambassador addressed the crowd.

Children's Rights

We are deeply concerned by reports that Hamas have launched a campaign to coordinate training camps for young people aged 15-21. The camps, designed to promote Hamas' military wing to a new generation of Gazans, offer religious and military training, in exchange for much needed food aid for trainees' families.

We continued to have concerns about Israel's treatment of Palestinian child detainees. We welcomed steps taken by the Israeli authorities to address these concerns, through trialling the use of summons instead of night-time arrests; notification of minors of their legal rights at the time of arrest; and the right of parents to accompany their children to interrogations and hearings.

We also welcomed changes made to the law, including the increase in the age of majority in the West Bank from 16 to 18 years, and the creation of a Juvenile Court. We continued to encourage further measures.

In close coordination with the IDF and the Israeli Ministry of Justice, our Embassy in Tel Aviv attended the trial of one of the five boys from Hares village, currently in Israeli detention,

charged with 20 counts of attempted murder for allegedly throwing stones at a car. We emphasised to the Ministry the importance of providing the boys with a fair trial, and continued to follow the case closely.

In November, the Israeli cabinet approved a bill extending the maximum penalty for those found guilty of throwing stones to 20 years, equivalent to the longest possible sentence for manslaughter. This bill also applies to children.

At least 11 Palestinian children in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were killed in 2014 after being shot with live ammunition by Israeli soldiers. Fatalities increased in the aftermath of the killing of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank, and the subsequent revenge killing of a Palestinian teenager.

Ministers and the British Ambassador in Tel Aviv spoke and wrote to both the Israeli Justice Minister and the Israeli Attorney General to urge Israel to take action. We repeated our concerns on issues including the transfer of Palestinian child and adult detainees to prisons inside Israel, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Racism

We remained deeply concerned by incitement against Israel in the Hamas-run media and leadership, which continued to be both anti-Israel and antisemitic. Our policy on Hamas remains clear: Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel, and accept previously signed agreements.

The UK government deplores incitement to hatred, discrimination or violence, wherever it occurs, and continued to raise instances of incitement with the Israeli authorities and with the PA. Actions such as the letter from President Abbas to the family of the shooter of Yehuda Glick, in which he said he would go to heaven as a martyr, are unacceptable. Our Consul-General in Jerusalem raised our concerns with the Palestinian authorities, and underlined the need to avoid inflammatory rhetoric.

We were also concerned by an increasing number of provocative visits to the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount compound, such as the visit by Housing Minister Uri Ariel in October, in which he called for Israel to act "with an iron fist". We were clear with both sides that that they must do more to promote a culture of tolerance, and to prepare their populations for peace.

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Other Issues

Settlement-building

The UK remained deeply concerned about the Israeli policy of settlement-building in the West Bank. The UK considers settlements illegal under international law. We also believe that their construction presents an obstacle to peace, and takes us

further away from a two-state solution. We strongly urge the Israeli government to reverse its policy.

Plans for 3,628 new settlement units were progressed in the West Bank between January and March, in violation of international law. On 6 April, Israel authorised the reclassification of almost one square kilometre of land in the West Bank as Israeli state land. In June, Israel announced the tender of 1,600 settlement units, many deep within the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. On 11 June, plans for a further 1,083 settlement units in the West Bank were progressed, including steps to legalise retrospectively and expand illegal outposts.

On 24 September, Israel's Jerusalem Municipality announced final statutory approval for the construction of 2,610 new settlement units in Givat Hamatos, East Jerusalem. On 30 September, Israeli settlers moved into seven buildings in East Jerusalem. At a time when the priority must be calming tensions, we judge that these announcements do serious damage to Israel's standing in the international community.

In June 2014, we updated our online advice to include EU Common Messages alerting businesses to the risk associated with financial and economic activities in settlements. This was part of coordinated action with European partners, and these messages have now been published by numerous European countries.

Settler violence in the West Bank also continued, including during the olive harvest season.

Right to adequate housing

The Israeli authorities increased the practice of demolishing Palestinian structures built without permits in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in such demolitions. We recognise that Palestinians face severe difficulty in securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure in East Jerusalem and Area C under the Israeli planning and permitting regime. We were also deeply concerned by the reintroduction of punitive demolitions.

Movement and access restrictions

We remained concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement. Overall, there was some progress with the number of exits per month via Erez, which was 32% higher than the monthly average in 2013. It remained difficult for Palestinians to enter East Jerusalem for work, education, medical treatment or religious worship. Through our Embassy in Tel Aviv, we lobbied the appropriate authorities on movement and access.

For the first time since 2007, barring limited exceptions, Israel allowed goods to transit from Gaza for sale in the West Bank in November, with the first shipments of agricultural products and subsequently wood and clothing to the West Bank. But restrictions continued to have severe consequences for Gaza's civilian population, including a record-high unemployment rate. We pressed both Egypt and Israel to ease restrictions.

The agreement between Israel, the PA and the UN on a monitoring and verification mechanism to facilitate the import and use of construction materials to re-build Gaza was an

important step in improving the dire humanitarian situation. Part of the UK's £20 million pledge at the Gaza reconstruction conference will go towards funding the mechanism.

Libya

The human rights situation in Libya deteriorated greatly during 2014, particularly in the second half of the year, due to an increase in fighting across the country, and a worsening political situation. After parliamentary elections in June, conflict broke out in July between competing alliances of militia factions, supporting rival parliaments in Tripoli and Tobruk. Of great concern were the high number of deaths and injuries of civilians as a result of conflict between armed groups in civilian areas, mass displacement, and humanitarian crises in many areas. The worst fighting was in Tripoli, Warshafana, the Nafusa mountains in the West, Benghazi in the East, and tribal areas in the South. Human rights violations and abuses related to this increase in violence and political hostilities included: extrajudicial killings by armed groups of captured combatants on both sides; beheadings by extreme Islamist groups; arbitrary detentions; and kidnappings and threats against political and military representatives, journalists, and human rights activists. The UK worked closely with international partners to support the efforts of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, Bernardino Leon, to bring an end to the violence through an inclusive political dialogue between the parties. In April, the UK Prime Minister offered diplomatic support for UN efforts by appointing Jonathan Powell as a Special Envoy to the Libyan Political Transition.

In March 2014, the UK worked closely with the Libyan authorities at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to agree a strong resolution that provided technical assistance to Libya, and requested a report from the High Commissioner of Human Rights on the human rights situation. The adopted text was led by the Libyans themselves. It was stronger than the previous year's and passed by consensus.

On 10 April, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, we launched our Human Rights Action Plan for Libya, which identified four priority areas for the UK to provide assistance by working in collaboration with the Libyan government and civil society groups. These were: preventing sexual and gender-based violence; detention and torture; freedom of expression; and the democratic process. Our programme work reflected these priorities, but had to be scaled back as a result of the temporary closure of our Embassy in Tripoli on 4 August, due to the security and political crisis. However, we continued to run a number of programmes in Libya which contributed towards our human rights objectives. These included two media projects to address the lack of good quality, balanced, and impartial reporting of events in Libya; a project on transitional justice processes in Libya; and a project for assisting women's civil society organisations to advocate for women's rights in the Libyan Constitution drafting process, and the national dialogue and reconciliation process.

The UK supported UN Security Council Resolution 2174 adopted on 27 August 2014. This included a call for an end to hostilities, condemned the use of violence against civilians and civilian institutions, and called for those responsible for human rights violations and abuses in Libya to be held accountable.

On 10 December, the UK marked Human Rights Day and launched a popular online campaign in Libya calling for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be respected. The

video produced for the campaign reached over 700,000 people.

However, we recognise that these efforts had only very limited impact on human rights in Libya in 2014. Obstacles included: the impact of the conflict on human rights and the humanitarian situation; the inability of those in power to enforce respect for human rights and humanitarian law; the temporary closure of our Embassy; and the scaling back of planned programme work as a result of the increased conflict. Improvement in 2015 will depend upon the success of the UN dialogue process. We will continue to support UN efforts towards a ceasefire and political settlement.

Elections

Parliamentary elections were held on 25 June 2014, with voting taking place in 1,592 out of a total of 1,648 polling stations. The technical aspects of the election were handled well by the Higher National Electoral Commission (HNEC), with support from the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The UK committed £600,000 to the UN Electoral Support Team working with HNEC to help plan and deliver effective and democratic elections.

Out of 1.5 million registered voters, around 630,000 Libyans cast their vote, with turnout affected by Ramadan preparations, fuel shortages, and a general lack of confidence that the electoral process was sufficiently representative. Security concerns forced 17 polling stations in central Derna to remain closed, while 10 centres in Kufra remained closed due to blockades preventing the delivery of election materials. In the West, a boycott by the Amazigh tribal community meant that no candidates had registered and polling could therefore not take place in 28 centres. Violence in Benghazi, which resulted in seven deaths and over 50 injured, caused one polling centre to be closed prematurely. The day was further marred by the murder of Salwa Bugaigis, a prominent and outspoken human rights lawyer and deputy chair of the National Dialogue Preparatory Committee, in her home in Benghazi. Despite the difficulties, overall the elections that took place were fair and democratic.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Many Libyans were fearful of voicing their opinions for fear of violent reprisals. There was a significant increase in threats, abductions and attacks against media representatives and journalists during the year, and a number were murdered. There were also threats and attacks against a number of radio and television stations during 2014. These incidents demonstrated not only the ongoing lack of control exerted by the Libyan authorities over security, but also suggested a worrying downturn in respect for media freedom.

On World Press Freedom Day, the UK worked closely with the UN to hold a day of events in Tripoli, which over 100 journalists and Libyan ministers attended. Throughout the event, journalists called for improved standards of reporting, and an end to assassinations and attacks on the media. The UK is also working to strengthen the capacity, quality and standards of journalists by funding two university media labs, and a series of

television news programmes to promote a positive Libya, and encourage free debate.

Human Rights Defenders

The UN received numerous reports of harassment, intimidation, abductions and murder of members of civil society, after fighting increased in May in Benghazi, and later in Tripoli and elsewhere in Libya. On 14 October, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, warned that armed groups were increasingly targeting human rights defenders (HRDs). Reports of violations included instances of threats on social media, and by telephone or text messages. The increasingly hostile environment for HRDs and civil society caused some to leave Libya, while others were intimidated into stopping their activism, or went into hiding for their own safety. The Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross Misrata branch was shot dead on 4 June in Sirte.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

In April, UNSMIL reported that 10,000 people were held in detention. That figure grew as detentions without trial and arbitrary arrests increased in 2014. In some areas, including Derna and Benghazi, the detention system completely collapsed. There was a lack of security for judges, prosecutors and judicial police, with assassinations, intimidation and kidnaps common, particularly in regard to conflict-related detainees. A number of detention facilities remained outside government control, including makeshift prisons run by armed militias. There was also a rise in the number of people kidnapped to aid in prisoner exchanges between militia groups.

In December the International Criminal Court (ICC) referred Libya to the UN Security Council for failing to meet its obligation to surrender Saif al Islam Qadhafi to the Court. The UK urged Libya's full cooperation with the ICC, recalling Libya's legal obligation to surrender Qadhafi to the Court. Qadhafi has been detained by a Zintani militia group since November 2011, which has refused to hand him over to successive Libyan authorities since his capture. The Libyan authorities began to try Qadhafi domestically on 27 April via video link, along with 38 other former regime officials. This followed an amendment to the Libyan Code of Criminal Procedure in March 2014 to allow defendants and witnesses to testify without being present in the courtroom. A number of international organisations raised fair trial concerns.

Death Penalty

Libya retained the death penalty and passed the death sentence in 2014, although there have been no state executions since 2011.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Detention centres and the treatment of detainees in Libya remained a concern, particularly facilities holding migrants. UNSMIL cited ongoing reports of torture and deaths in custody, with perpetrators including judicial police and militia groups. UNSMIL recorded cases of torture by militia groups from Warshafana and al-Zawiya (in al-Jazira and al-Janubi prisons) and in Tripoli (in Mitiga and Abu Salim detention centres). UNSMIL also documented abductions and the torture

of detainees, allegedly by Warshafana militia groups, forces allied to Libya Dawn, and forces affiliated to General Haftar.

More progress is needed on implementing the recommendations set out in the UN Report on Torture and Deaths in Detention published in October 2013. Detainees suffered from poor sanitation, overcrowding and a lack of medical provisions.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

The humanitarian situation in both Tripoli and Benghazi deteriorated as a result of the fighting in both cities, with reports of civilian casualties. There were also severe shortages of fuel, food and medical supplies, and extensive disruptions to the water supply and electricity services. Basic services in Tripoli improved after the fighting stopped, but damage to the infrastructure is extensive and will take a long time to repair.

On 6 August, Amnesty International issued a [press release](#) declaring the shelling of civilian areas a war crime. This followed a statement issued by the Libyan National Committee for Human Rights on 4 August, calling on the ICC Prosecutor to investigate crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by armed groups in Libya. This included crimes such as forcible displacement, kidnapping, murder and assaults on civilians and civilian areas. UNSMIL issued their own [statement](#) on 4 September that expressed concern about serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Tripoli and Benghazi.

In September, the UN declared a humanitarian crisis and, by December, estimated that over 400,000 people had been displaced by the hostilities in Libya. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate.

The UK is supporting humanitarian mine clearance in Sebha.

We were increasingly concerned by the rise in extrajudicial executions by extremist militias in Libya, including by the extremist Ansar Al Sharia group. In October, the UK co-sponsored the designation and sanctions against this group as an Al Qaeda terrorist entity under UN Security Council Resolution 1267.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Concerns remained around freedom of religion or belief. During 2014, extremists and Salafists took advantage of the instability to target buildings that they believed needed to be "purified" of such things as graves, shrines, idols, or excessive adornment, or that are known to follow Sufist teachings. Some of the most serious examples of this destruction included attacks on mosques, and vandalism of the most important Sufi shrine in Libya, Zliten's Sidi Abdul-Salam Al-Asmar Al-Fituri shrine.

Women's Rights

The role of women in Libya, in terms of political engagement, did not improve during 2014. Decision-making for women in public life, and freedom of movement, remain issues that need to be addressed. The UK provided support to women's groups to enhance their skills in leadership and advocacy, including strengthening women's participation in parliament, and

pushing for women's rights to be reflected in the constitution. Tripoli University established a quota in its electoral lists for the student union, stipulating a minimum of one woman on each list.

It is impossible to obtain precise information on the prevalence of sexual violence in conflict in Libya as very few victims come forward. Anecdotal evidence and UN and non-governmental organisation (NGO) reporting suggested that sexual violence was perpetrated by Qadhafi forces and revolutionaries against women, men and children, before and during the Arab Spring. Reports suggested that rape of women by armed men occurred in homes, and that sexual violence was used as a tool in detention centres to extract information, humiliate and punish. It is common for survivors to take their own life or be outcast by their families. There remained a strong stigma preventing victims from reporting offences and seeking assistance, and a lack of support services for survivors, including access to justice. On 8 June, the UK held a local event in Tripoli with 40 civil society activists to talk publicly about sexual and gender-based violence in Libya.

The UK hosted the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London on 12-13 June. The Libyan Deputy Foreign Minister attended with a delegation that met UK experts to discuss the implementation of the Council Ministers decree 119/2014 to support victims of sexual violence during the Qadhafi regime and revolution. They focused on legal reform, database management and psychosocial support. The Libyan delegation was fully engaged on the issue, and recognised the importance of providing support for survivors of sexual violence. They expressed strong interest in working with the UK Team of Experts to help develop and cost the implementation plan, and we are exploring the feasibility of doing this when circumstances allow.

Minority Rights

The majority of Libya's population is Arab, but there are significant minority groups including the Tuareg, Amazigh and Tebu. Under the Qadhafi regime, minority groups were often marginalised and not afforded the same rights as other Libyans. Human rights NGOs continued to report targeted harassment, attacks and abductions by armed groups against members of the displaced Tawargha community, for their perceived association with the former Qadhafi regime.

We remained concerned about the absence of representation of minority groups on the Constitutional Drafting Committee. As Libya undergoes the process of drafting a new constitution, it will be important that the minority groups' voices are heard. It is important that women and representatives of minority groups participate fully in the process and have an effective voice in the constitutional drafting assembly. Where opportunities arise, we will continue to encourage full representation of minority groups and interests in the constitutional drafting process.

Pakistan

2014 was another troubling year for human rights in Pakistan. Severe and wide-ranging violations and abuses continued unabated, with little apparent prospect of improvement. The year began with violent sectarian killings in Balochistan, and ended with one of the worst terrorist attacks in Pakistan's history, when more than 140 people, including 132 children, were killed at the Army Public School in Peshawar. The government, facing challenges across a number of fronts, including increased militancy, responded by lifting the *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty in the case of terrorism offences, and the first executions were carried out on 19 December. The National Commission for Human Rights, signed into law by the National Assembly in 2012, has still not begun operating, and recommendations agreed with the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) during Pakistan's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), were not implemented. Concerns about media freedom, minorities and other issues were highlighted in reports by Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International and others. Pakistan remained near the bottom on a number of crucial indicators, including the UN Human Development Index (146 out of 187). Despite some positive moves by federal and provincial authorities to introduce laws to protect vulnerable groups in Pakistan, lack of implementation of these laws, and of political will to tackle human rights, remained a significant barrier to progress.

Last year's report identified several human rights objectives for Pakistan in 2014: freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, democracy and elections, promotion of the rule of law, and women's rights. It is essential that Pakistan takes steps to make progress on these objectives in 2015 to avoid a further deterioration in human rights. The UK will continue to urge the government of Pakistan to guarantee fully the human rights of all of its citizens, as set out in the Constitution of Pakistan, and in accordance with its international obligations.

The UK continued to work with other partners to improve the human rights situation. In 2013, the EU granted Pakistan duty-free access to EU markets under the Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) trade scheme. In 2014, the EU initiated a review of Pakistan's progress in implementing 27 international conventions on human rights, good governance and labour standards, as a condition of retaining GSP+ status. The UK worked with Pakistan to encourage their engagement in this monitoring process. In December, the Commerce Ministry established a Treaty Implementation Cell to ensure compliance with these conventions.

The UK worked with government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector, and international development partners to influence policy, leverage Pakistani resources, and strengthen state accountability, in order to bring basic services and entitlements to poor and excluded people. We also supported civil society organisations working with some of the poorest and most marginalised communities, to help strengthen demand for improved government service provision, and promote women and minority group participation and human rights. This included programmes on: education and health, particularly focused on women and girls; economic development, including jobs and skills

training; improving citizen access to security and justice; humanitarian support to those affected by conflict and other natural disasters; and working with very poor and marginalised communities, including religious and ethnic minorities, to increase women's participation in politics and local decision making, and support local level dispute prevention.

Elections

The May 2013 elections were widely reported as Pakistan's freest and fairest. However, in November 2014, an Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) report revealed that over 1.5 million votes had been rejected in these elections, the highest number of votes ever rejected during any election in the country's history. In 150 constituencies out of 266, 5,000-10,000 votes were rejected. Election tribunals formed in June 2013, to investigate over 400 allegations of electoral malpractice, had failed to dispose of more than half the petitions after 15 months, and were given a two-month extension in December. In the same month, Balochistan carried out the third phase of local government elections, and is the only province to have complied with a Supreme Court order to form local government bodies. After a delay of over 16 months, a new Chief Election Commissioner was appointed at the end of 2014; one day before the Supreme Court's fourth deadline was set to expire. We welcomed the increased scrutiny and transparency of electoral institutions.

The UK continued to support comprehensive electoral reforms, working with the ECP and national and international civil society organisations to improve the credibility of the electoral process, including increased participation of women, both as voters and as candidates. We supported citizens' groups to hold elected representatives and public institutions to account, and worked with political parties to help them become better organised and more responsive to citizens' needs.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Pakistan continued to benefit from a diverse and lively media, but remained one of the most dangerous places for journalists to operate. Reporters Without Borders rated Pakistan 158 out of 180 countries in its 2014 World Press Freedom Index, and reported that Balochistan was one of the five most dangerous areas in the world for journalists, caught between terrorist attacks and arbitrary detention by security forces. At least seven journalists were killed in 2014, one remains missing, and dozens received death threats.

At the start of the year, the Pakistani Taliban issued a "hit-list" of more than 20 journalists and publishers it held responsible for misrepresenting them. In March, journalist and TV anchor Raza Rumi, known for his outspoken views against the Taliban, narrowly escaped an attempt on his life in Lahore. A month later senior journalist and GeoNews TV anchor Hamid Mir was critically wounded in an attack in Karachi. The attack was condemned internationally. On World Press Freedom Day in May, the British High Commissioner in Islamabad called on "all in Pakistan to support a free and fair press, where journalists can go about their vital work without fear, intimidation or harassment".

In June, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority suspended the broadcasting licence of private television channel GeoNews for 15 days, and fined Geo TV 10 million rupees (approximately £64,000). This followed a complaint by the Ministry of Defence that the channel's reporting had brought the main intelligence agency into disrepute. During the year, other television channels received similar penalties for alleged controversial or sacrilegious content.

The government ban on YouTube entered its third year. In November, Facebook revealed that requests from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and IT Ministry, to restrict access to blasphemous content, increased almost tenfold from January to June, compared to the previous six months. In December, Freedom House ranked Pakistan 69 out of 100 for Internet freedom, down two points from 2013, and the lowest in Asia after Vietnam and China. We continued to call on Pakistan to allow space for a free media.

From August to December, there were widespread opposition-led protests against alleged rigging of the 2013 elections. Although numbers were not huge by Pakistan standards, the length of the protests was unprecedented. The resultant media coverage increased the level of debate, and awareness amongst ordinary Pakistanis on issues of elections reform, corruption, rights, VIP culture, and dynastic politics. This tested the commitment of the government, law enforcement agencies and army to democracy and the right to peaceful protest. Despite some criticism of the police response to an escalation in protests, the authorities showed considerable restraint during the protests.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

In 2013, we reported our concerns about the Protection of Pakistan Ordinance (PPO) which aimed to tackle militancy. The Protection of Pakistan Citizens Act was approved by parliament in July after opposition amendments to provide a number of human rights safeguards, including greater judicial oversight and a time-limited period of application. Under the act, suspects may be held for questioning for 90 days instead of the current limit of 15. The UK, along with EU partners, regularly raised concerns on the provisions of the PPO and the act as inconsistent with international human rights standards. We continued to urge the Pakistani authorities to ensure that implementation complies with these standards.

On 24 December, in response to the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, Prime Minister Sharif announced a 20-point National Action Plan to tackle terrorism. The plan included the establishment of military courts to fast-track the most serious terrorist cases. There are concerns that these courts, not subject to civilian oversight, could undermine international fair trial standards.

The UK continued to work with Pakistani police, prosecutors and the judiciary to enhance their capacity for investigating, prosecuting and sentencing terrorist suspects in line with international human rights law and standards.

At the federal level, activities focused on building political support for counter-terrorism (CT) prosecution reform, and efforts to improve the legal framework for CT in Pakistan. Our

aim was to ensure that law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges had the tools they needed to tackle terrorism in a human rights compliant manner.

Longer term, we are working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to improve security and access to justice through strengthening civilian security (police, prosecution and correctional services) and the formal and informal justice sectors. Our programme aims to make these institutions more human rights compliant, more accountable, and more responsive to citizens, particularly women.

Death Penalty

Throughout 2014, death sentences were handed out across the country. There were more than 8,000 prisoners on death row. Following the attack in Peshawar on 16 December, the year ended with the resumption of executions for terrorism cases, with seven executions being carried out. The Pakistani government estimated 500 people were sentenced on terrorism charges. The UK opposes the death penalty as a matter of principle in all circumstances, and believes there is no conclusive evidence that it is an effective deterrent. Working with our EU partners, we will continue to urge the Pakistani authorities not to continue with executions, and to re-establish the moratorium.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

High rates of terrorist and sectarian violence continued in 2014, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, and wider Balochistan. State security forces, supporters of political parties, and sectarian groups are the most frequent targets. The perpetrators are rarely caught and brought to justice.

In June, Pakistan's army launched a large-scale operation to clear North Waziristan of militants. Over one million internally displaced persons (IDPs) were forced out of the region. The UK provided over £10 million to expand its support, providing over one million IDPs in 2014 with assistance such as food packages and access to protection services. Following the displacement from North Waziristan, this support enabled tens of thousands more people to benefit from further assistance, including clean water, sanitation and skills training.

17 healthcare workers and 28 security personnel were killed by militants alleging that polio vaccination was a western conspiracy; by December, End Polio Pakistan reported almost 300 cases of polio compared to 93 in 2013.

There were allegations of human rights violations in Balochistan, particularly reports of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. A march from Quetta to Islamabad to protest against enforced disappearances and killings of Baloch, which started in November 2013, continued until the end of February 2014. The "Voice for Baloch Missing Persons" alleged that more than 18,000 Baloch were "missing". In January and March, mass graves containing more than 20 mutilated bodies were discovered in Khuzdar, Balochistan. In September, the Asian Legal Resource Centre, an NGO, made a written submission to the HRC alleging incidents of extrajudicial killing throughout Pakistan.

In December, the National Human Rights Commission expressed alarm at the increasing reports of enforced disappearances in Sindh. Between August and December, at least ten activists of Sindh nationalist political parties were reportedly abducted by security agencies; their bodies were later found dumped. The commission urged the government to ratify and implement the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. In the same month, the World Sindhi Congress condemned the extrajudicial killing, abduction, disappearances and torture of Sindhi and Baloch people.

We continued to raise with senior military and government figures the need to protect human rights and implement a criminal justice response to fighting terrorism. Human rights will remain a core consideration in any security and justice sector assistance we give to the Pakistani authorities.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Shia, Hazara, Christian, Ahmadiyya, Hindu, Sikh, Kalash, Ismaili and Sufi communities reported intimidation and violence, kidnap, forced conversion and marriage, attacks on their places of worship, and other forms of targeted persecution. Sectarian killings of Shia and Sunni Muslims, including members of religious parties, were reported more regularly in 2014 throughout the country.

In January and June, suicide bombers killed Shia pilgrims in Balochistan, close to the Iranian border. Hazaras in Quetta continued to be targeted by militants throughout the year, including attacks in January and October, killing 40. At the end of June, HRW released a report, "We are the Walking Dead", documenting the "alarming and unprecedented escalation in sectarian violence" directed against Shia Hazaras in Balochistan, and urging the government to take immediate measures to investigate and prosecute sectarian killings.

In July, an Ahmadi woman and two children were killed in Gujranwala when a mob set fire to houses, following accusations of Ahmadiyyas posting blasphemous content on social media. The incident was condemned by former Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Warsi, and Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening. In December, an Ahmadi man was shot and killed near Gujranwala, five days after a Muslim leader denounced the Ahmadiyya as the "enemies of Pakistan" on a popular television show. The Ahmadiyya complained that government ordinances, punishing Ahmadis for calling themselves Muslims, were used by extremists to justify violence against the community. At least 11 Ahmadiyya were killed in 2014.

Increasing numbers of Muslims and non-Muslims were charged under the country's controversial blasphemy laws. In May, a lawyer was killed in his office in Multan after defending a university lecturer accused of blasphemy.

On 4 November, a Christian couple in Punjab accused of desecrating the Quran were beaten to death by a mob, and their bodies burnt in a kiln at their workplace. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif immediately condemned this incident and Chief Minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif, ordered an investigation.

On 5 November, FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, issued a statement expressing revulsion and urged the Pakistani authorities to bring to justice those responsible. Four of the main suspects, including the owner of the brick kiln, were arrested.

In 2013 we reported on Asia Bibi, a Christian woman sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010. On 16 October, after several delays and postponements, Asia Bibi's death sentence was upheld at an appeal hearing in the Lahore High Court. The EU, supported by the UK, issued a statement of concern and hoped the sentence would be overturned on appeal. Asia Bibi's lawyers filed an appeal to the Supreme Court in November. We will continue to raise our concerns with the Pakistani authorities where these laws have been misused.

Women's Rights

During 2014, Pakistan further slipped from 123 to 126 (out of 149) in the UN Gender Inequality Index, and was ranked 141 out of 142 in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, with little indication of serious attempts to reverse this trend. Increasing incidents of so-called honour killing, rape, acid burning, domestic violence and assaults were reported. The Acid Survivors Foundation estimated that there were 114 cases of acid attacks in Pakistan in 2014, involving 159 victims. Women and couples were murdered, often in extremely brutal circumstances, in so-called honour killings across Pakistan.

In May, Farzana Parveen was stoned to death by her family outside the Lahore High Court for marrying a man of her choice. The brutal nature of Parveen's killing triggered outrage around the world. Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond condemned the murder as "barbaric", commenting that "there is absolutely no honour in honour killings", and urged the Pakistani authorities to bring those responsible to justice. At the end of the year, four of Parveen's male relatives were sentenced to death for her murder.

In a more positive development, in April, the Sindh Assembly unanimously passed the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Bill, becoming Pakistan's first elected assembly to pass legislation prohibiting child marriage. In June, the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, and the Special Envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie, co-hosted the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Pakistan sent a senior representative to the summit and endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. In July, Prime Minister David Cameron and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) hosted the Girl Summit, which addressed child, early and forced marriages; Pakistan attended at ministerial level.

UK aid was targeted at gender rights in 2014, particularly in the fields of education, health and empowering girls and women. The Department for International Development (DFID) worked with public sector and low-cost private schools to support more girls in primary and lower secondary schools. In 2014 over six million children in primary school benefited from DFID's support. For example, in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, marginalised girls were provided with stipends to increase their participation and retention in secondary

education. On health, work included efforts to increase the uptake of reproductive health and family planning services. We also supported the development and implementation of provincial legislation to protect women and strengthen their rights through the Aawaz Voice and Accountability Programme. This included the establishment of the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women.

The UK expanded our support to the government of Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Programme. To date, the programme has supported 4.7 million women in the poorest families, out of which 235,000 families are attributed to DFID support. We also encouraged greater economic participation by women through supporting training in new skills (68,770 people trained in skills of which 36,800 attributable to DFID, 40% women), helping women to access financial services such as micro-loans, and supporting 1.49 million micro-finance borrowers, of which 54% – 804,600 – were women. The UK worked across 45 districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces, and through over 5,000 community groups, to empower poor communities, women and minority groups. We helped to strengthen these groups' political voice and involvement in local decision making, and increased community capacity to engage with state service providers and resolve disputes peacefully and inclusively.

Russia

Following Russia's invasion and illegal annexation of Crimea in March, and fomenting of violence in eastern Ukraine, there has been a significant deterioration in the human rights situation in parts of Ukraine (see *"Country Case Study: Crimea and Separatist-Occupied Areas of Ukraine"* on page 102).

The human rights situation in Russia deteriorated further in 2014. The Ukraine crisis and worsening economic context accelerated the squeeze on civil liberties and created a ready environment for restrictive policies. The shrinking space for freedom of expression and increasing pressure on civil society were areas of pronounced decline and of principal concern. A series of hastily adopted and disproportionate laws limited the space for dissenting views, particularly in the media and online. The Kremlin's narrative of defending "traditional Russian values" was the basis on which they sought to justify extra layers of control. Human rights violations in the North Caucasus remained of grave concern.

Our human rights objectives in 2014 focused on civil society and democracy, equality and non-discrimination, rule of law, North Caucasus, and freedom of expression. UK-funded projects, run by Russian and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), totalling £1.1 million, successfully delivered human rights projects and contributed to capacity building at grassroots level. Russia refused to participate in the annual UK-Russia Human Rights Dialogue in 2014. Nevertheless, we continued to raise concerns about human rights in bilateral meetings at all levels. We also made regular public statements expressing concern about human rights and democracy issues, including the "foreign agents" NGO law and the sentencing of defendants in the Bolotnaya case (see *"Freedom of Expression and Assembly"* on page 154 below). We engaged regularly with human rights activists, and worked with the EU and other like-minded partners to deliver our human rights objectives.

We expect the negative trend in the human rights situation in Russia to continue in 2015, as the worsening economic climate and continuing situation in Ukraine reinforce the Kremlin's instincts to control dissent. Freedom of expression, assembly and association are likely to be particularly vulnerable. The five priority themes of our human rights work in 2015 will remain civil society and democracy, equality and non-discrimination, rule of law, North Caucasus, and freedom of expression. We will continue to put pressure on Russia on human rights bilaterally, and through multilateral bodies such as the EU, UN, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe. We stand ready to resume the annual UK-Russia Human Rights Dialogue, and hope that this will take place in 2015. We will continue to support civil society and monitor a number of ongoing court cases that have raised concerns about the fair application of the rule of law.

Elections

Regional and municipal elections in September were characterised by low turnout and a lack of genuine choice. Some opposition candidates were prevented from standing by the requirement for their candidacy to be endorsed by 5-10% of local lawmakers. A number of sitting governors stood down

before the end of their mandates to trigger early re-election, depriving other candidates of time to mobilise. Local observers reported cases of ballot-stuffing, carousel voting, and observer intimidation.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Freedom of expression continued to be restricted by state-controlled attempts to manage messaging and limit the space for alternative views. A series of laws were criticised by human rights defenders (HRDs) for reducing the space for freedom of expression in the media and on the internet. Key examples were a law requiring bloggers with more than 3,000 daily visits to register with the authorities, and bear the same legal responsibilities as full media outlets; a law banning commercial advertising on paid cable and satellite television channels (due to come into force in January 2015), which will give national state-controlled channels a further advantage; and a law limiting foreign ownership of Russian media outlets to 20% (due to come into force in January 2016). At the same time, state-controlled media promoted a fear of internal and external enemies, creating an environment where HRDs themselves were portrayed as traitors.

Russia was ranked 148 out of 181 countries in the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index for 2014, and categorised as "a difficult situation". Independent media outlets came under increased pressure, and a number of journalists were dismissed or physically attacked after reporting alternative views. Russia registered the biggest annual drop in global internet freedom of the 65 countries surveyed by research and advocacy NGO, Freedom House.

Fifteen people were sentenced to up to four-and-a-half years in prison in 2014 in relation to protests that took place in Bolotnaya Square on 6 May 2012 (the eve of President Putin's inauguration). In February, we reiterated concerns about the Bolotnaya case, highlighting restrictions on the freedom of assembly and expression in Russia. Human Rights Watch (HRW) called the Bolotnaya case a "mockery of justice", noting that an international panel of experts on free assembly, including representatives of the OSCE, had found there were minor clashes with police, but not the major riots that the prosecution claimed.

The Moscow authorities denied permission for a Gay Pride march in May, as they have done for the last nine years. Increased penalties for violating the law governing public rallies and protests were introduced in July. Amnesty International reported that most protest actions in Russia had been either severely restricted or barred and dispersed.

The Foreign & Commonwealth (FCO) Minister for Europe, David Lidington, and the FCO Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Anelay, raised concerns about freedom of expression in Russia with the Russian Ambassador in October and November. Through our Human Rights and Democracy Programme, we funded a project to help protect and promote freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including online, by improving the digital, physical and legal safety, and protection of Russian journalists and bloggers.

Human Rights Defenders

The operating environment for HRDs and civil society activists became increasingly constrained in 2014. Many were subject to harassment and violence. As well as those working on human rights issues, those expressing alternative views on the conflict in Ukraine were at particular risk.

In August, Timur Kaushev, a 26-year-old journalist, blogger and HRD, was found dead in the republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. Despite claims that he was murdered because of his work, the Russian authorities refused to open an official investigation into his death. Impunity for past attacks on journalists in Russia remained a major problem in 2014. Investigations into the murders of Akhmednabi Akhmednabiyev (2013) and Natalia Estemirova (2009) have not produced conclusive results. In June, five men were sentenced for plotting and killing Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya in October 2006. However, Politkovskaya's family and human rights activists have expressed disappointment that those behind the killing have still not been held to account.

On 4 June, Russia passed an amendment to the "foreign agents" law allowing the Ministry of Justice to designate NGOs as "foreign agents" without a court order. By the end of 2014, 30 NGOs had been placed on the register. Once on the register, NGOs are subject to cumbersome reporting requirements and are obligated to mark all their materials with the words "foreign agent". Non-compliance could result in large fines. We raised concerns about the "foreign agents" law bilaterally at a number of levels in 2014. Mr Lidington expressed our deep concern about the increasing pressure on NGOs, and urged the Russian authorities not to place advocacy groups under special scrutiny. We maintained regular contact with HRDs, and will continue to support projects to improve their situation in Russia.

With our support, Russian NGO, Memorial Human Rights Centre, provided legal assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, forced migrants, stateless persons and labour migrants.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

The rule of law in Russia remained inconsistent and arbitrarily applied. Concerns about the impartiality of courts, corruption and poor prison conditions were ongoing. Opposition figure, Alexei Navalny, was subject to a number of criminal investigations in 2014. On 30 December, Navalny and his brother Oleg were found guilty of defrauding cosmetics company, Yves Rocher Vostok, and both sentenced to three-and-a-half years' imprisonment. Alexei's sentence was suspended, but his house arrest, in force since February 2014, remained in place for legal reasons which remain unclear. Many independent observers believe that the charges against Navalny are politically motivated, and the decision to imprison his brother designed to deter him from political activity. Environmental activist, Evgeny Vitishko, remained in detention for damaging a fence in 2012, after an appeals court upheld the decision to enact a three-year custodial sentence against him in February. HRDs claim that the case against him is politically motivated, and linked to his work exposing the environmental impact of the Sochi Winter Olympics. The Netherlands-based Human Rights Initiative for the Former USSR

recorded 114 political prisoners in Russia as of October, more than double the 52 they recorded in December 2013.

Several foreign nationals were illegally transferred across the border to face criminal charges in Russia in 2014. Estonian security officer Eston Kohver was abducted from Estonian territory by Russian Security Services in September; he has reportedly been denied regular access to lawyers and consular staff. Mr Lidington raised concerns about Kohver's illegal abduction with the Russian Ambassador, and called for his immediate release. Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov and Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko were both transferred into Russia from Ukraine. In an echo of Soviet practice, Savchenko was forced to undergo psychiatric assessment in October, and Sentsov alleges that he was tortured in custody. We raised concerns about these cases bilaterally and multilaterally, and urged Russia to ensure that due legal processes are followed.

In December, Transparency International published its annual "Perceptions of Corruption Index", which rates countries according to how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. Russia was downgraded from 127th to 136th out of the 175 countries surveyed. At the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), Russia received 129 judgments in 2014, in which it was held to have violated convention rights; more than any other State Party to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Following the closure of the investigation into his death in 2013, there was still no justice in the case of late Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who died in pre-trial detention in 2009. FCO officials raised concerns about the Magnitsky case in a meeting with the Russian Embassy in November, urging Russia to strengthen the rule of law and prosecute those who abuse it. In 2014, we funded a number of practical projects focused on developing the rule of law in Russia, including a project that aimed to reduce the death rate of prisoners in Russia by improving prison healthcare.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Media and NGO reports of law enforcement personnel and prison staff engaging in torture, abuse or excessive violence are widespread, indicating that torture is a systemic and everyday practice in the Russian penal system. Poor training and a culture of impunity are key contributing factors. In 2014, we continued to support the Russian NGO, Committee Against Torture, who work to expose torture by law enforcement officials in the North Caucasus and ensure they are prosecuted.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

The situation in the North Caucasus region remained unstable and tense, with ongoing violence, including terrorist attacks in Grozny, Chechnya, in October and December. According to the independent news agency, Caucasian Knot, 341 people were killed and 184 injured from January to November as a result of the conflict; 37 of those killed and 16 of those injured were civilians. There were also reports of grave human rights violations committed by state security forces, including allegations of extrajudicial killings, torture and disappearances. We continued to have significant concerns about the use of collective punishment in Chechnya, including the burning

down of houses of the relatives of suspected militants. Threats to human rights groups remained; the offices of the human rights organisation, the Joint Mobile Group, were subject to an arson attack in December. We have called for Russia to implement fully key ECtHR judgments, and for action on individual cases through the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

In 2014, we supported a range of human rights and conflict prevention projects in the North Caucasus. They focused on educating communities on conflict prevention issues and monitoring human rights violations. With our support, Russian NGO, Genesis, worked to develop constructive public dialogue on the prevention of radicalism and extremism among young people, and promoted interaction between different parts of society in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Ties between the state and the Russian Orthodox Church remained close. Some other religious groups continued to face bureaucratic obstacles in a range of areas, including acquiring legal status, establishing places of worship, and distributing religious literature. At least 18 Jehovah's Witness groups were subject to criminal proceedings under Russia's extremism law in 2014.

There were widespread reports of harassment of Muslims, especially in the North Caucasus. In Moscow, a city with approximately two million Muslim citizens, there are no more than six official mosques. In certain parts of the country, plans to build additional mosques have been thwarted. In Kaliningrad, lawyers representing parts of the 100,000 strong Muslim population have indicated that they will now take a case to the ECtHR.

We raised concerns about freedom of religion in Russia through the EU. We will continue to monitor the impact of Russia's use of "extremism" legislation on religious minorities.

Women's Rights

Violence against women remained a cause of concern. According to official figures, 12,000 women are killed annually in Russia as a result of domestic violence (one woman every 40 minutes). In the North Caucasus, women continued to face threats, including marriage by abduction and so-called honour killings. Draft legislation on domestic violence has been under consideration for over two years and we hope to see this finally introduced in 2015.

With our support, Russian NGO, Ekaterina, developed a domestic violence forum to help women and children victims of domestic violence in Yekaterinburg.

Business and Human Rights

Illegal displacement of minority groups – including through arson – by companies engaged in resource extraction is an under-publicised issue in Russia. Hundreds of migrant workers at the Sochi Olympic Games, mainly from minority ethnic groups, reported not being paid, working excessive hours, poor living conditions and food, unlawful detentions and hasty deportations.

HRW estimated that around 2,000 families were displaced because of construction for the Sochi Winter Olympics. Many were not adequately compensated, and some were not compensated at all.

LGBT Rights

The situation for LGBT people continued to deteriorate in 2014. In September, Russia's Constitutional Court ruled that the law banning the promotion of "non-traditional" sexual relations among minors was not in breach of the Russian constitution. We had strong concerns about this law, particularly its potential to legitimise homophobia and encourage violence against LGBT people. In December, HRW released a report documenting an increase in violence and harassment against LGBT people in Russia since the law was introduced in June 2013. The report claimed that anti-LGBT groups had used the law to justify campaigns of harassment and intimidation, including campaigns to get LGBT teachers fired from their jobs. The report concluded that the "Russian authorities have failed in their obligation to prevent and prosecute homophobic violence."

The operating environment for LGBT NGOs remained difficult in 2014. In January, Russian police detained at least 14 gay rights activists protesting in Moscow and St. Petersburg on the opening day of the Sochi Winter Olympics. Prominent Italian gay rights campaigner, Vladimir Luxuria, was detained while watching the Winter Olympics in Sochi with a banner reading "Gay Is OK". The Russian Open Games, a five-day international sporting event organised by the Russian LGBT Sports Federation in February, was disrupted by smoke bombs and bomb threats. Games organisers experienced difficulties in securing sporting venues and accommodation for athletes, which they claimed were a result of pressure from the authorities. In September, the opening of the St Petersburg LGBT film festival "Queer-Fest" was disrupted by anti-LGBT protestors, and subsequent film screenings were disrupted by hoax bomb threats and last-minute venue cancellations. In November, the Side by Side LGBT Film Festival in St Petersburg went ahead without major problems.

FCO officials raised concerns about the safety of participants at LGBT events with the Russian authorities in November. In December, Mr Lidington raised concerns about the protection of LGBT rights in Russia with the Russian Ambassador. We supported the operation of a counselling hotline for LGBT people in Russia, as well as a capacity building project for Russian LGBT activists. We also supported the Russian Open Games in February, along with the US Embassy and other EU Embassies in Moscow.

On 29 December, the Russian government passed a decree which could potentially prohibit certain groups from driving, including transgender people. We asked the Russian government for clarification on the application and implementation of this decree in order to understand its impact fully.

Racism

Preliminary data from Russian NGO Sova Centre shows that 19 people were killed and 103 injured in racist violence in Russia

in 2014. A further two received death threats. Racist violence appeared to have reduced slightly from 2013, when it rose significantly for the first time since 2009. The annual nationalist “Russian Marches”, which often have a xenophobic tone, took place in 36 towns and cities across Russia on 4 November, but the number of participants was lower than it had been in recent years.

Other Issues

Disability rights

In March, Russia was praised for raising awareness of disability rights and transforming Sochi, the host city for the Winter Paralympic Games, into a barrier-free city. However, disabled people still faced serious challenges, including access to education and employment. Children with disabilities are particularly at risk. An estimated 80% of children born with Down’s Syndrome are abandoned by their parents. In September, HRW issued a [report](#) on the rights of children with disabilities in state orphanages. The report found that these children were often subject to serious abuses and neglect which severely impaired their development.

The British Embassy in Moscow and Russian disability NGO, Perspektiva, supported the visit of two British Paralympic athletes to Moscow in March, as part of the Embassy’s ongoing work to promote disability rights in Russia. The Paralympians met school children at an “inclusive education” school and shared experiences with a group of Young Leaders with disabilities. With our support, Perspektiva worked to build a legal advocacy network of disability NGOs to support people with disabilities in eight Russian regions.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia continued to make incremental improvements on human rights in 2014, as the government carried on implementing its reform programme, led by His Majesty, King Abdullah. But we continued to have concerns over the human rights situation, particularly in relation to the use of the death penalty, access to justice, women’s rights, and restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion or belief. There was some progress in women’s rights and the death penalty, but significant institutional change in Saudi Arabia is needed to protect the human rights of its residents, especially with regards to the guardianship system and restrictions on freedom of religion or belief.

There were significant changes in the justice sector. On 10 September, the Secretary of State for Justice, Chris Grayling, visited Saudi Arabia and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Saudi Arabian Minister of Justice, Dr Muhammed Abdul-Kareem al-Issa. This should act as a mechanism for dialogue on human rights issues and an exchange of expertise on justice and legal matters. It follows up on the work undertaken by Dr al-Issa to implement a large-scale reform programme aimed at judicial modernisation in Saudi Arabia.

On 31 January, the Saudi Arabian government published the full text of its new counter-terrorism and terrorism financing legislation, outlining the procedures and punishments to be applied. Later, on 7 March, the Ministry of Interior issued a decree creating Saudi Arabia’s first list of proscribed organisations. Amongst the groups included were Al Qaeda and its affiliates (including the Al Nusra Front, Al Qaeda-Iraq, and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula), Saudi Hezbollah, certain Houthi groups in Yemen and the Muslim Brotherhood. Groups and individuals who are engaged in civil and political debate and call for reform were concerned that this legislation would be used against them. We have followed this issue closely since its inception, and have noted that many human rights activists have been sentenced in the Specialised Criminal Court, designed for security and terrorism cases. We are concerned that the legislation was invoked during the trial of Waleed Abu al-Khair, a prominent human rights activist. We have not seen evidence that it is being used routinely to target individuals engaging in civil and political debate, but we will continue to follow this issue closely.

Elections

Political participation in Saudi Arabia is limited; there are no political parties and the majority of government bodies are fully appointed by the King. The next elections will be for the Municipal Councils, expected to be held in 2015, in which half the membership will be elected and half appointed. These elections will be the first in which women will be allowed to vote and stand as candidates. The UK will continue to encourage further democratic representation, and we will offer our assistance to Saudi Arabia to prepare for the elections.

Human Rights Defenders

There were a number of arrests and prosecutions of human rights defenders (HRDs) in 2014, primarily under the law

requiring all non-governmental organisations to register. To date, no fully independent organisation working on civil and political rights has registered successfully. The anti-cyber crime law has also been used to convict social activists.

In April, Waleed Abu al-Khair was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, a 15-year travel ban, and a fine of 200,000 Saudi Riyals (approximately £35,000) for criticising the judiciary. This followed his arrest, prosecution, and subsequent three-month imprisonment, for a very similar charge in October 2013. In May, Raif Badawi, a human rights activist and blogger, who received the Reporters Without Borders' 2014 Press Freedom prize, was sentenced to ten years in prison, 1,000 lashes, a ten-year travel ban, and a fine of one million Saudi riyals (approximately £176,000). The UK condemns the use of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment in all circumstances. In October 2014, Suad Al Shammari, who founded Saudi Liberal Network with Badawi, was arrested for insulting Islam and endangering public order.

It should also be noted that some HRDs or their families have asked that the UK government does not involve itself in such cases because they believe it undermines their credibility in the country, and may prove counterproductive.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

In March, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, signed a MoU with her Saudi counterpart to help modernise the Ministry of the Interior, which draws on UK expertise in the wider security and policing arena. This will complement work going on between the College of Policing and a range of Saudi security bodies.

The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Justice continued to implement its reform programme, led by Dr al-Issa. This reform programme has led to the opening of the Family Court, the first specialised court in Saudi Arabia, and there are plans to build a further 22 new courts in 10 cities at a cost of US\$320 million. In addition, a significant amount of money has already been spent on new court houses, technology, and judicial training. The Appeal Court and new Supreme Court have increased access to justice. A new arbitration department has been formed to reduce the number of trial cases. Nevertheless, the legal system continues to suffer from long delays in bringing defendants to court and a lack of codification of case law. We have raised our concerns about this, but there are signs that trials are becoming more transparent, with access sometimes given to media and the diplomatic community. However, this is still at the discretion of the individual judge. We also expect people to be brought to trial more quickly as the number of judges increases.

To assist in the justice sector, the UK National Offender Management Service, through their commercial arm, Just Solutions international, submitted a bid for a contract to conduct a training needs analysis across all the learning and development programmes within the Saudi Arabian Prison Service.

Death Penalty

The death penalty continued to be used in Saudi Arabia, and in 2014 there were 86 executions, an increase on the previous

year, when there were 78. Those executed were mainly for murder, drug-related offences, and armed robbery, though at least one person was executed for "sorcery". The majority of these executions were carried out in prisons, but some were carried out in public. The principle of the death penalty is enshrined in Saudi Arabia's Sharia law; we therefore assess that abolition of the death penalty is not likely in the near future. However, fewer death penalty sentences were passed in 2014. We currently focus our efforts on encouraging Saudi Arabia to apply the EU minimum standards for capital punishment and on reducing the number of death sentences and executions.

The Saudi Arabian government continues to encourage the families of victims to show clemency by waiving their right to have the perpetrators executed. In July, King Abdullah personally intervened to prevent 12 people from being executed by asking victims' families to agree not to enforce this right.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Corporal punishment continued to be used in Saudi Arabia under Sharia law. Most recently, an amputation was carried out in Makkah in December.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

We continue to be concerned about the restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in Saudi Arabia which reflect widely-held conservative social values. Non-Muslims are not permitted to worship openly or establish places of worship in Saudi Arabia. The UK government has made clear to the Saudi authorities our strong support for this right. In February 2014, then Foreign & Commonwealth (FCO) Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Warsi, raised the importance of religious tolerance in meetings with the Governor and the Mayor of Makkah, the Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques, and the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. We continue to work with those in Saudi society who advocate peaceful reform.

Women's Rights

Women's rights in Saudi Arabia are principally affected by the guardianship system, under which their freedom to participate in society is greatly restricted. Women need the consent of a male relative to travel, work and study. However, there were some incremental improvements in women's rights in Saudi Arabia in 2014.

For example, the number of women in employment increased significantly. For example, there were over 400,000 women employed in the private sector by the end of 2014, compared with 183,000 in 2013. However, there remained a number of obstacles to equality of employment of men and women, and in December the Saudi Arabian government stated that over one million women were unemployed.

In March, during her visit to Saudi Arabia, Mrs May met a group of women active in the Majlis Ash-Shura (advisory council), business, and academia to discuss the role of women in Saudi society.

Six of the 30 female members of the Majlis Ash-Shura, who were appointed in early 2013, were chosen as deputy chairs of Shura committees (foreign affairs; administration and human resources; education and scientific research; culture, media, tourism and antiquities; human rights and monitoring authorities; and social, family and youth) in December.

Saudi Arabia fully participated in Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative efforts. At the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June in London, Head of the Saudi delegation and President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, Dr Bandar Al Aiban, signed a Statement of Action. All signatories to the statement endorsed a commitment to hold to account those responsible for acts of rape and sexual violence in conflict, as well as a commitment to providing support to the victims of these crimes and to those affected by sexual violence in conflict.

Saudi Arabia remains the only country where women are not permitted to drive and we continue to raise this issue with the Saudi government. In December, two Saudi Arabian women, Loujain al-Hathloul and Maysa al-Amoudi, were arrested for attempting to drive into Saudi Arabia from the United Arab Emirates. They held valid Emirati driving licences. We are concerned by their detention and that the hearing of their court cases will be in the Specialised Criminal Court. We continue to follow their cases closely.

Other Issues

Migrant workers

Following the expiry on 4 November 2013 of the amnesty for illegal workers to regularise their status or leave the country, the Saudi authorities focused on illegal, unregistered migrants in 2014. On 20 March, the Ministry of Interior reported that they had deported 370,000 illegal migrants to their countries of origin, while another 18,000 people were in detention centres awaiting deportation. These deportations continued throughout the year.

We believe that recent legal reforms for migrant workers, including the requirement of employers to keep more accurate labour records, will improve the basic rights of migrant employees in Saudi Arabia. As part of these reforms, legislation has been put in place which requires workers to be paid at least monthly, to have access to their own identity documents, and for domestic workers to have at least nine hours' rest per day and one day off per week. In addition, fines and sponsorship bans were imposed for employers in Saudi Arabia failing to pay their domestic workers on time.

We welcome any improvement in the legal position of migrant workers, and continue to follow the situation closely.

Somalia

In 2014, the human rights situation in Somalia remained of grave concern. Civilians continued to be killed, wounded and displaced, with violations and abuses committed by all sides of the ongoing internal conflict. There were numerous reports of sexual violence and violations against children, and access to justice was severely restricted. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is practically universal, with some estimates putting FGM prevalence as high as 97.8%.

Impunity remains the core issue underlying the majority of human rights violations and abuses in Somalia. The FCO's primary human rights objective for Somalia in 2014 was to support the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) to implement its commitment to build effective institutions that respect human rights, with a particular focus on preventing sexual violence.

There is cause for cautious optimism. The Ministry for Women and Human Rights Development, created in December 2013, is responsible for driving forward human rights reforms in Somalia. It consulted widely on a post-transition roadmap for human rights, and legislation to establish a national human rights commission is being readied for parliamentary agreement. The FGS was also an active participant in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London in June, and was supported by the UK in the launch of a detailed Somali National Action Plan on ending sexual violence. In 2014, forces from the African Union (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army liberated several population centres from the control of the extreme fundamentalist group Al Shabaab in 2014. However, it should be noted that this progress will only impact FGS-controlled areas.

At the end of 2014, political instability in Somalia slowed government progress, including on the passing of key human rights legislation. The formation of a new government early in 2015 is a chance to reinvigorate the legislative agenda. In 2015, the UK will be keen to see delivery begin on those processes started in 2014 – the formation of the national human rights commission; implementation of the action plans on ending sexual violence, and the post-transition roadmap for human rights; and improved stabilisation in areas liberated from Al Shabaab, with citizens enjoying the rights and freedoms afforded by law and access to justice.

Elections

The Interim South West Administration elected their president in November. The vote was generally considered to have been representative of clan composition. The UK now urges the new leadership to demonstrate full inclusivity, of all communities, in the remaining steps of the process and in the creation of the regional assembly. Presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for 2016, with an electoral law scheduled to be passed in 2015. Efforts underway to empower women in politics and ensure women have a voice are welcome, and the UK will look for ways to support this in the lead-up to the 2016 elections.

Elections in Somaliland are also scheduled for 2015, and the Department for International Development (DFID) has

provided initial support for their preparation, including for the participation of disabled persons.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Five local journalists are thought to have been the subjects of targeted killings in 2014, down from a peak of 12 during 2012. Somalia remained second on the Committee to Protect Journalists Impunity Index for the fourth year in a row. The actors behind such killings remain largely unidentified with few successful investigations or prosecutions into these and other attacks.

Concern persisted over government suppression of media freedoms, with closures of radio stations and arrests of journalists considered to be critical of government. Local media organisations and unions complained about unfair targeting of journalists. There were similar concerns with the Somaliland Administration. The UK, alongside international partners and the UN, continued to call on the FGS and Somaliland authorities to prevent impunity for crimes against journalists, and protect media freedom – the UK will monitor the proposed new media law in Somalia closely.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Somalia's military courts were granted temporary powers to try all offences committed in areas declared under a state of emergency in 2011. However, access to these courts is restricted, making it difficult to confirm whether defendants have received a fair trial and been able to prepare a defence.

The state justice system remained challenged by limited qualified staff and capacity to manage an increasing caseload. Corruption remained widespread, though efforts by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MoJCA) to draft anti-corruption legislation were encouraging. The independence of the judiciary was also a key concern, and the UK will continue to engage with the FGS on the impact of the establishment of the Judicial Service Commission and new legislation on the organisation of the judiciary.

The UK continued to support the development of the Somali justice system through DFID's £52 million Core State Functions Programme which runs from 2012-16, working with partners including the UN and International Development Law Organisation.

In 2014, DFID supported expanded access to justice in Somalia through mobile courts and legal assistance projects. These have reached over 10,000 people, a third of these female, and many of whom were victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). DFID also supported SGBV referral centres. During 2014, the UK co-chaired the federal level peacebuilding and state-building working group for justice, under the New Deal Framework, at which representation from legal civil society and the regions gradually increased. The MoJCA recruited a significant number of qualified staff and advisors. The new Policy and Legal Drafting Unit and Joint Implementation Support Unit facilitated stakeholder consultations on draft legislation, including on the constitutional court and judicial service commission, and developed detailed justice plans that include the development of the justice sector in the regions and at the local level.

Somaliland and Puntland also advanced their justice sector plans and are incrementally expanding the reach of state justice institutions. DFID provided technical assistance to a range of institutions in Somaliland, including the Attorney General's Office, High Judicial Council, and nascent Bar Association, in coordination with wider UK support in training judges and prosecutors.

Death Penalty

Somalia's use of the death penalty continued to be of concern. 13 executions were reported to have been carried out in Mogadishu between January and August, with several reports of public executions carried out in the presence of children. The UK is fundamentally opposed to the use of the death penalty and has raised our concerns with the FGS. We will continue to encourage the FGS and Puntland administration to suspend death penalty sentences and establish a moratorium on the death penalty, and encourage the government in Somaliland to formalise the de facto moratorium in place there.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

AMISOM operations to liberate parts of Somalia from the extremist Al Shabaab militant group led to fears of increased civilian casualties and humanitarian impact of the conflict. Internal displacement, and negative impact on activity during the planting and harvest seasons, exacerbated food shortages. The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 857,000 Somalis were in crisis, with a further two million struggling to meet their own minimal food requirements. Through DFID, the UK put in place a £145 million multi-year humanitarian programme, which provides for both emergency response and protection of livelihoods.

Following the offensive, the FGS focused on the stabilisation of newly recovered territories. Ensuring local political settlements are in place and securing peace are vital to consolidating stability. The UK committed over £3.5 million for infrastructure, training and outreach. A more secure and stable environment also led the UN Human Rights Council to begin repatriations of Somalis from Kenya for the first time in 23 years. However, the durability and sustainability of returns remains uncertain, and the risk of forced repatriation from Kenya increased with recent legislation to limit the number of refugees that Kenya is prepared to host.

In light of AMISOM's efforts to restore freedom to Somalia, it was particularly concerning that a Human Rights Watch report, released in September, detailed allegations of 21 cases of sexual abuse and exploitation by AMISOM peacekeepers. The reported high levels of sexual violence carried out by men in uniform, including the Somali National Army and AMISOM, remained deeply troubling. The African Union (AU) confirmed its zero tolerance policy on misconduct or abuses in peace support operations, and investigations started in November; we look forward to their outcomes in early 2015, and will continue to work with the AU, and countries contributing troops, in order to improve their capacity to prevent and prosecute these crimes. The UK already supports pre-deployment training programmes for AMISOM on prevention of sexual violence, international human rights laws, and best practice in assisting women and children in the aftermath of

violent conflict; we also provide support to the AU's Gender Peace and Security Programme.

Women's Rights

The President of the FGS, Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud, reiterated his commitment to women's rights during the November visit of the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop. He stated that, "women's rights and protection are a key priority in the agenda of the government of Somalia."

In April, a UN Team of Experts on Sexual Violence in Conflict released a draft report and recommendations with a view to creating a national action plan to tackle sexual violence in Somalia. The plan was presented at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London, which enjoyed the attendance of a large and diverse delegation from the FGS. A steering committee, bringing in key donors, government departments and UN bodies to ensure coordination, was formed to deliver the action plan. We look forward to the first meeting of that committee early in 2015, and the UK will continue to push for full and fast implementation.

Somalia has the highest rate of FGM in the world, with an estimated 95% of girls undergoing the practice. The FGS attended the Girl Summit in July and, along with the government of Puntland, signed the Girl Summit charter. Puntland approved a policy to end FGM and is working to put it into law. The FGS is in the process of producing a Sexual Offences Bill that will address FGM and SGBV. The UK is working closely with the FGS to develop a national action plan on the eradication of FGM and, following that, a long-term strategy for implementation. Somaliland is delaying signing the charter, despite consistent support from the UK.

At the High Level Partnership Forum in Copenhagen, a side event on increasing women's political participation was co-chaired by Minister Diriye and DFID Minister, Baroness Northover. The event had strong support from both the President and the Ministry of the Interior, and provided a mandate for the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development to work toward constitutional and electoral reform that favours increased participation by women in all levels of decision-making. The UK will continue to support this work.

Minority Rights

The Somali population, for the most part, shares a common language and religion. However discrimination along clan lines is widespread. Members of minority clans or communities that do not have clan structures, or have been displaced, are especially vulnerable. The UK will continue to push the FGS, the administrations of Somaliland and Puntland, and federal regional administrations to increase efforts to ensure fully inclusive legislatures and governments that are representative of the whole of the Somali people.

Children's Rights

There are longstanding concerns about the use of children in armed conflict (CAAC) in Somalia, with reports of children being used on both sides. The UN Secretary General's most recent annual report on CAAC, released in May, documented

1,293 cases of recruitment and use of children in conflict in Somalia during 2013. Over 900 of these cases were perpetrated by Al Shabaab, although other cases involved the SNA and government-associated militia.

The former Foreign & Commonwealth Office Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, has raised the issue with the Somali President and, during the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, hosted a ministerial roundtable on CAAC. This was attended by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for CAAC and FGS ministers, who underlined their commitment to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

Somalia was one of only three countries not to have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, on 25 September, the Somali President announced that the FGS would ratify the convention, and a law was passed in the Somali parliament on 13 December, bringing the provisions in the convention into FGS law. It is due to be formally ratified in early 2015. Regrettably, though, Somalia put a reservation on articles 14, 20 and 21, in order to review them for compliance with Sharia law.

Other Issues

Piracy

Piracy fell to its lowest level since 2006, and no merchant vessels have been attacked by pirates since 2012. However, 30 hostages remain in captivity. We donated £1 million in 2014 to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Maritime Crime Programme Horn of Africa (MCP-HoA), to develop FGS capabilities to manage their own coastline and maritime zones. This included maritime and criminal justice capacity-building initiatives. MCP-HoA assists Somalia with upgrading its prisons and courts with the aim of ensuring that Somali pirates convicted in other countries can serve their sentences in their home country, where they can access their own culture, families, and appropriate skills training during their prison sentence. UK funding helped to build a new prison in Hargeisa (Somaliland) and the refurbishment of Garowe prison (Puntland), which was officially opened in April. Under UNODC's Piracy Prisoner Transfer Programme, 91 prisoners have already been transferred to the prison. In addition, a further £500,000 was contributed to a UNODC programme to create a new secure facility in South Central Somalia.

South Sudan

There was a significant deterioration in the human rights situation in South Sudan in 2014. The conflict that began in December 2013 had a profound effect, with severe human rights abuses and violations suffered by the civilian population. The scale of the conflict has been deeply disturbing, with the UN reporting gross violations and abuses of human rights on a massive scale. Despite commitments by the South Sudan government to tackle sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers, these remained widespread. We were also extremely concerned about the narrowing of political space, with journalists harassed, and aspects of proposed domestic legislation aimed at increasing the power of the security services and reducing the space for civil society. Due to the ongoing conflict, progress on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's (FCO) aims of addressing the contributing causes of conflict, such as a lack of tolerance of political dissent, corruption and the lack of accountability, was minimal.

Nonetheless, human rights remained at the top of the agenda for the UK government in our dealings with South Sudan throughout 2014. We repeatedly lobbied the government, including at ministerial level, on a range of human rights issues. However, given the context, a major focus was on seeking to bring an end to the conflict, which ultimately would have the single biggest positive impact for human rights in South Sudan. The UK government was closely involved in the mediation efforts led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The UK Special Representative actively supported the peace talks in Addis Ababa, and worked closely with IGAD and our Troika partners (the US and Norway) to urge the parties to secure an inclusive peace agreement that will benefit all the people of South Sudan.

In the absence of an agreement, however, human rights violations and abuses as a result of conflict are highly likely to continue into 2015. It is also likely that the overall trajectory of a narrowing of political space will continue, as the South Sudan government seeks to assert its control. If a peace agreement is reached, it will be important that accountability plays a central part in the work of any transitional government. Those responsible for human rights abuses must be held to account. We support the work of the African Union Commission of Inquiry (AU CoI). The CoI report should be published and highlight the need for accountability and set out options for ensuring justice. Supporting international mechanisms for promoting peace and accountability will be central to the UK's human rights objectives in South Sudan in 2015. We will also support access to justice, freedom of expression, and preventing sexual violence in conflict through our lobbying and project work.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Aspects of domestic legislation discussed by the National Assembly in 2014 showed a trend towards a narrowing of political space in South Sudan. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) raised concerns about the NGO Bill, which would bring the sector under greater government control. FCO Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, wrote to the South Sudanese foreign minister in October reflecting the

concerns of the UK NGO community about the bill. A number of South Sudanese MPs also expressed concern, and the bill was withdrawn for further consultations.

We also raised concerns about the draft National Security Service Bill's compliance with South Sudan's interim constitution. This bill set out measures that would empower the Security Service to take a broad range of actions with limited accountability or judicial oversight. It also included measures which contradict some of the more positive aspects of the draft NGO bill. The President sent the bill back to parliament for further review.

Three bills relating to the media passed into law. These included the Broadcasting Corporation Act, Media Authority Act, and Right of Access to Information Act. The South Sudan government should now ensure these acts are properly implemented and communicated to the public.

The government's general treatment of the media also remained deeply worrying. Reports of harassment and intimidation of journalists increased in frequency. In September, the Interior Minister described journalists reporting opposition views as "anti-government agitators". As a result of such intimidation and harassment, self-censorship by media houses and journalists rose. The UK continues to raise the issue of the centrality of freedom of expression as part of ongoing contacts and dialogue with the South Sudan government on human rights.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Both the South Sudan government and the opposition committed to ensure accountability for violations and abuses. There was increased reporting that the government took action to hold its forces to account, but lack of transparency and communication around these investigations mean that we were not able to assess the credibility of these actions. The South Sudan Human Rights Commission compiled a report of atrocities committed during the ongoing conflict, but the South Sudan government is yet to make this public. Former Minister for International Development, Lynn Featherstone, visited in September 2014, and urged the government to make its findings public. Without further action by the government and the opposition forces, it is likely that a culture of impunity will prevail throughout South Sudan.

Weaknesses remained in the judicial system, with many detainees unaware of their rights and lacking legal representation. It was reported that over 90% of citizens relied solely on the customary justice mechanisms, due to lack of access to the statutory legal system at the community level, particularly in rural areas. Both customary and statutory systems need to be strengthened to provide a fairer and more equitable justice service, including to the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women. The UK will support justice service delivery at the community level, linking it with national level systems in 2015.

As a result of the conflict and related human rights concerns, UK bilateral support to the security sector ceased. However, the British Embassy in Juba maintained political and strategic engagement with security sector institutions, primarily the

South Sudan National Police Service, to whom support is being provided through the UN and civil society to promote policy dialogue, human rights and accountability, and to tackle sexual and gender based violence.

The UK continued its support to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in 2014, including through a revision of its mandate that made monitoring, investigating, and verifying reports of human rights violations and abuses, one of three key areas of focus.

Death Penalty

South Sudan resumed implementation of the death penalty in 2013 and continued to issue death sentences throughout 2014. This was disappointing given South Sudan's previous vote in favour of the biennial UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty in 2013. The UK continues to urge the government to abolish the death penalty.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

The lack of capacity and willingness from both sides to discriminate between combatants and civilians remained deeply concerning. The UN reported targeted attacks against civilians and violence aimed at spreading terror amongst the civilian population, in addition to regular denials of humanitarian access. Whilst the intensity of the conflict decreased during the second half of the year, security remained highly fragile, and credible reports were received suggesting that human rights violations and abuses also continued to be carried out at inter-tribal levels.

The conflict has resulted in the widespread displacement of a sizable percentage of the population. By 31 December, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that nearly two million people were displaced overall, with nearly 500,000 as refugees in neighbouring countries. Since the outbreak of conflict, approximately 100,000 displaced persons have sought refuge in various Protection of Civilians camps around the country managed by UNMISS.

The UK is one of the largest donors to South Sudan and has committed £132.5million to the in-country humanitarian effort since the start of the crisis. We also worked closely with the UN to bring vital aid to those made most vulnerable, and to help protect the human rights of those displaced. For example, we deployed police officers to the policing element of UNMISS, who have undertaken work focused on sexual and gender-based violence issues, human rights, community policing and accountability.

Women's Rights

Sexual violence, though not exclusively used against women and girls, has been a recurring aspect of conflict in South Sudan. But the scale of violence in 2014 was particularly concerning. An estimated 74% of sexual violence victims are under the age of 18.

UK ministers identified South Sudan as a priority country for the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), and South Sudan attended the Global Summit to End Sexual

Violence in London in June. Ms Featherstone visited in September 2014 as the Ministerial Champion for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Overseas, and had the opportunity to engage with a range of national stakeholders on this issue. In October, the Secretary General's Special Envoy on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, visited South Sudan and issued a joint communiqué with President Kiir, committing South Sudan to the development of an action plan with concrete measures. This commitment was encouraging, and demonstrated a degree of recognition on the government's part of the extent and seriousness of the issue, but we have seen little in terms of follow on action to date. The UK continued to press for the implementation of measures set out in the communiqué, and supported projects which provide help to the survivors of sexual violence.

Harmful traditional and cultural practices in South Sudan continue, directed towards women and girls. The Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Humanitarian Affairs remained willing to engage on such issues, but continued to suffer from a lack of sufficient capacity to address them.

Children's Rights

Prior to the outbreak of the current conflict, the most significant issue affecting children was internal displacement as a result of inter-tribal fighting and floods, making them more vulnerable to manipulation and abuse. The abduction of children has also been a traditional feature of inter-communal violence.

In 2012-13, the Sudan People's Liberation Army undertook to identify, demobilise and reintegrate all remaining children within its ranks. But the outbreak of conflict severely undermined these efforts, and we had credible reports from NGO partners of a resurgence in the recruitment of child soldiers by both sides of the conflict during 2014. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) states that in 2014 some 12,000 are reported as being used by armed forces and groups in the conflict. In January 2015, UNICEF commenced a project to support the reintegration of child soldiers linked to the Greater Pibor Administration Area. The British Embassy in Juba continued to monitor the situation closely, and the UK continued to call on both sides to halt the recruitment of child soldiers. Mr Duddridge hosted a roundtable on CAAC during the UNGA in September that included discussion on South Sudan.

Children continue to form a significant proportion of the internally displaced population. Concerns about their living conditions remain, and it will take time to assess the overall humanitarian impact.

Sri Lanka

The human rights situation in Sri Lanka continued to be of concern in 2014, with little overall improvement. The UK remained concerned over a number of issues: restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly; increases in attacks on Muslim and Evangelical Christian minorities; reports of torture and allegations of extrajudicial killings; and restrictions faced by minority Tamils in formerly conflict-affected areas in the north and east. Human rights defenders (HRDs) and those with dissenting voices were intimidated and subjected to harassment.

Sri Lanka's poor human rights situation was exacerbated by the weakness of state institutions and the judicial system. The Sri Lankan government expanded the mandate of the Presidential Commission to Inquire into Complaints Regarding Missing Persons to investigate and report on matters during the final stages of Sri Lanka's conflict. However, they refused to cooperate meaningfully with a number of key international human rights mechanisms on the issue of war crimes and accountability, including the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The UK used its position in the HRC to urge the international community to establish an independent international investigation into alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights in Sri Lanka during the recent conflict, due to the absence of a credible Sri Lankan domestic process. On 27 March 2014, the HRC adopted a resolution which established the OHCHR Investigation in Sri Lanka (OISL). The resolution, co-sponsored by the UK, also called on the Sri Lankan government to make progress on addressing ongoing human rights and reconciliation issues, including establishing a credible domestic accountability process.

The UK consistently urged the Sri Lankan government to fulfil their international obligations on human rights. We made clear that the activities of HRDs were legitimate and that they should not be subject to harassment and intimidation. Our High Commission in Colombo actively monitored the human rights situation around the country through meetings with a variety of organisations, and actively promoted human rights across various media. The UK also funded projects and programmes specifically designed to improve the human rights situation, including on police reform and women's rights.

Presidential elections were called for January 2015. The UK was concerned at the conduct of the election campaigning in late 2014, including abuses of state resources and incidents of violence. We continued to see respect for human rights, a sustainable political settlement and accountability for alleged war crimes as priorities for any future government.

Elections

Provincial elections held in the Western and Southern Provinces in March were generally peaceful, despite one fatality following an inter-party confrontation. In contrast, Provincial Council elections held in Uva in September saw violence and the large-scale abuse of state resources. Over 300 reports of campaign violence, including three serious incidents on election day, were

reported by election monitors. The Mayor of Bandarawela and an Eastern Provincial Council member were hospitalised following separate assaults. Local election monitor, People's Action for Free and Fair Elections, did not consider the election free and fair, pointing to violence, widespread abuse of state property, and the use of public servants in election propaganda activities.

Following the November announcement of Presidential elections for January 2015, related violent incidents began to be reported. Up to the end of December 2014, local election monitors recorded 293 incidents of election-related violence. 168 of these were major incidents, including 21 instances of firearms being used, two attempted murders, 40 assaults, five incidents of arson, and one attempted abduction. The vast majority of attacks were allegedly by pro-government groups targeting the opposition.

On 29 December, Commonwealth Secretary, General Kamallesh Sharma, stated that the people of Sri Lanka must be able to "freely exercise their franchise, in an enabling environment marked by transparency, a level playing field, and adherence to the laws and norms that govern a credible and peaceful election". The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon conveyed his "strong expectation" that the government of Sri Lanka would ensure "the peaceful and credible conduct" of elections.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly were reported throughout 2014, with continued intimidation, harassment, and a number of attacks on journalists, civil society, artists and opposition politicians. Sri Lanka dropped three places, to 165 out of 180, in the 2014 World Press Freedom Index.

There were many reported incidents of intimidation of journalists. In April, in an incident condemned by Reporters Without Borders, a journalist was attacked with iron rods in the northern province of Jaffna. Also in April, law enforcement representatives extensively questioned the editor of a leading Colombo-based newspaper following the publication of a photograph of a senior government official's wife with a controversial caption. A Tamil monthly newspaper faced harassment, and a distributor of the paper was assaulted and his newspapers dumped in a nearby reservoir by an armed gang.

In separate incidents in July, a leading political analyst and a film maker were subject to threats and harassment. A journalist was interrogated by law enforcement over his reporting of the Aluthgama riots and his work with Aljazeera. The President of the Bar Association faced intimidation following a number of outspoken comments.

NGOs involved in journalism training were targeted on several occasions, and hotels hosting investigative journalism workshops were subject to threats and intimidation. For example, individuals and journalists involved in organising a training course for Transparency International were subject to death threats, and those who travelled for the training were allegedly obstructed by Sri Lankan security forces. In July, a mob stormed the Sri Lanka Press Institute, disrupting

a journalism training programme. On 1 July, the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development instructed NGOs not to train journalists, hold press conferences, or issue press releases unless specifically agreed, noting that such activities “exceeded their mandate”.

The Committee to Protect Journalists, Front Line Defenders, the International Press Institute, Reporters Without Borders, and Transparency International all expressed concern about escalating intimidation. They called on the Sri Lankan authorities to take action to protect the safety of civil society. The British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka issued a statement on World Press Freedom Day noting that Sri Lankan journalists worked against a difficult backdrop of harassment and intimidation. He encouraged the government to renew its commitment to free expression by protecting journalists and ensuring investigations into past crimes.

Opposition MPs also faced violence, including a group of United National Party MPs and accompanying media personnel. They were attacked by a mob when touring the international airport and a port, Hambantota, in May. There were a number of attacks on street drama teams and artists.

Incidents related to freedom of assembly were reported throughout the year. In March, a local activist Jeyakumari Balendran and her 13-year-old daughter, who were leading protests on the “disappeared”, were detained under the Prevention of Terrorists Act for allegedly harbouring a terror suspect. The local magistrate ordered Jeyakumari to be detained for 16 days under anti-terrorism laws, and her daughter was placed in social care. Local and international activists condemned the arrests. Jeyakumari remains in detention and her case is not scheduled to be heard until 13 March 2015, which would mark one year since her arrest.

A group of monks disrupted a meeting between civil society and representatives of families of the “disappeared”. Posters organising an event to commemorate the “disappeared”, which vilified leading civil society figures, were discovered on 25 October. Stones were thrown at the residence of the chief organiser of this event.

In May, 18 students leading protests in Colombo were arrested; four were later admitted to hospital with injuries. The main university students’ union, the Inter University Student Federation, alleged that the students’ injuries were a result of police torture, and had resulted in the blinding of one victim. Civil society organisations condemned the “assault, arrest and alleged torture” of the students. In December, students protesting over education rights were dispersed with water cannons and tear gas, and then allegedly further attacked by police, resulting in 28 students being hospitalised.

In other incidents, protesting fishermen were pelted with stones, and three were subsequently hospitalised. Two union leaders were allegedly subject to assault by unidentified groups on 25 October. The Free Trade Zone and General Employees Services Union, in a letter to the Inspector General of Police, said that “it is clear that our Trade Union leaders are being suppressed systematically”.

Human Rights Defenders

HRDs working in Sri Lanka continued to report harassment, intimidation, and increasing restrictions on their work. Several HRDs were labelled as Tamil Tiger supporters by a pro-government paper. Investigations into past incidents, from 2008 to the present, also failed to make any progress.

There was a domestic and international outcry after the Terrorist Investigations Department arrested two well-known Sri Lankan HRDs in March. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for South Asia, Hugo Swire, was among those who raised concerns over the arrests and detention. Although released two days later, they remained under court order and investigation. A community leader, critical of the state’s urban land acquisition policy, was abducted by unidentified persons, but similarly released after public protest.

In November, Mayuri Inoka, the wife of a man allegedly abducted by members of the local police in 2013, was also abducted, but managed to escape. She told the media that she was threatened with the same fate as her husband if she did not stop her campaign to find him. In the north, a Citizens’ Committee Chairman, at the forefront of a campaign to release a HRD detained for over 200 days without charge, was attacked with iron rods, and threatened with death if he continued his campaign.

Throughout 2014, the UK consistently urged the Sri Lankan government to fulfil their international obligations on human rights, and to act to stop the harassment and intimidation of HRDs.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

In February, the Sri Lankan Supreme Court overturned a 2013 Court of Appeal ruling that had found the report of a Parliamentary Select Committee on the impeachment of the Chief Justice null and void. The impeachment had drawn considerable national and international criticism, including from the International Commission of Jurists, the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, and the Bar Council of England and Wales.

The “Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses” Bill was presented to Parliament on 10 September. The UK welcomed the move and hopes to see the bill passed in 2015. However, concerns over detention issues remain, with reports of suspicious deaths in custody, and deaths of suspects shot by police while allegedly attempting to flee. The Friday Forum, a local civil society organisation, also raised concerns about the deaths of alleged criminals under arrest “in very suspicious circumstances”.

In July, the Sri Lankan government appointed an international Advisory Council to advise the Presidential Commission to Inquire into Complaints Regarding Missing Persons, established to investigate disappearances in the north and east from 1990-2009. Concerns remain over the effectiveness, capacity and independence of the inquiry.

Death Penalty

Sri Lanka has maintained a de facto moratorium on the death penalty since 1976, but again abstained on the UN General

Assembly Third Committee “Moratorium on the use of the Death Penalty” resolution in December.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

There were continued allegations of police involvement in torture and custodial deaths, as well as in extrajudicial killings throughout 2014. The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) reported that a 17-year old in police custody was “severely tortured along with his brother and another family member”, denied medical treatment, and “died in the remand prison while his brother held him in his arms”.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

There were a high number of incidents targeting minority Christian and Muslim communities. On 15 June, violence erupted between Muslims and Sinhala Buddhists in Aluthgama and neighbouring Dharga Town in the south west, with the majority of the attacks against Muslims. These clashes and the subsequent rioting, which continued until 17 June, left at least three Muslims and one Tamil dead, scores injured, and dozens of homes and businesses destroyed. Inflammatory statements made by extremist Buddhist organisations, such as the Bodu Bala Sena, were blamed by many for rising tensions. The international community, including the UK and many international organisations, such as Amnesty International and the Organisation of Islamic Countries, expressed their concerns, and urged a thorough investigation into the attacks. They urged the Sri Lankan government to ensure that the rule of law was upheld, and welcomed assurance to investigate and take action against those responsible for the incidents. President Rajapaksa pledged to investigate the June violence, but no prosecutions had taken place by the end of 2014.

A local NGO noted attacks and intimidation against evangelical churches by mobs that included Buddhist monks. Evangelical Christian churches continued to report attacks on individuals, churches and prayer meetings, threats and harassment, restrictions on their right to assembly, and unfair administrative burdens. In March, two bombs were thrown at a mosque that had been repeatedly targeted by extremist groups for two years.

The HRC resolution of 27 March expressed alarm at the significant surge in attacks against members of religious minorities in Sri Lanka. It called upon the Sri Lankan government to end continuing incidents of human rights violations, and to investigate all alleged attacks on members of religious minority groups and places of worship.

Although communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims decreased towards the end of 2014, tensions remained, and sporadic attacks on Muslim and Christian places of worship and businesses continued to take place.

Minority Rights

There was no progress on seeking or achieving a political settlement with the minority Tamil community. There remained concerns over the situation in the predominantly Tamil and Muslim areas in the north and east. The UK continued to urge the government to work with the Tamil National Alliance to find a political solution.

In April, three Tamil Tiger operatives were killed by security forces near Vavuniya in the north during a reported confrontation. Subsequent security operations in the north and east saw scores detained and questioned, house-to-house searches, over 60 arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and restrictions on movement in some areas.

Although military drawback was evident in some areas, there was still a high level of military involvement in commercial and other civil activities, and the occupation of land in high security zones or military cantonments. The security forces have been accused of human rights violations, including rape, in these areas. Land rights continued to be an issue, with claims that Tamil land was being appropriated by the military and government for reallocation to the Sinhala majority.

On 10 October, the Ministry of Defence announced that all foreign passport holders would require prior permission to travel to the north.

Other Issues

Working with the UN

International focus on Sri Lanka intensified during 2014. On 24 February, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a report on reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka. The report recommended that the HRC establish an international inquiry mechanism to further investigate alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the Sri Lankan conflict, due to the lack of political will of the Sri Lankan government to make progress. The UK strongly supported the assessment of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On 27 March, the HRC adopted a resolution which established an international investigation into allegations of serious violations and abuses of human rights on both sides of the conflict, and called on the Sri Lankan government to make progress on accountability, reconciliation and human rights. The UK was a main co-sponsor of the resolution, which built on the texts of resolutions in 2012 and 2013. Following the vote, Prime Minister David Cameron said that the resolution was “triggered by the failure of the Sri Lankan government to stand by its promises to credibly and independently investigate alleged violations on both sides during the war”.

On 19 August, President Rajapaksa announced that HRC-mandated investigators would not be allowed to visit Sri Lanka. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights presented an oral update to the HRC on 22 September. He regretted the Sri Lankan government’s rejection of the HRC resolution and decision not to cooperate with the investigation. He also raised concerns over “threats currently being leveled against the human rights community in Sri Lanka, as well as prospective victims and witnesses”, and deplored recent “incitement and violence against the country’s Muslim and Christian minorities”. The UK has consistently called on Sri Lanka to engage with the investigation and expressed concern about threats and intimidation against those wanting to give evidence to the investigation.

Sudan

The human rights situation in Sudan remains of deep concern to the UK; there was no overall improvement in 2014 and in some areas the situation deteriorated. Contributing factors were the following: the human rights abuses and deteriorating humanitarian situation generated by the ongoing conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile; the lack of personal freedoms, as highlighted by the continuing arrest and detention of members of the opposition, civil society figures and journalists, and regular confiscation of newspapers; and the lack of religious freedom, as highlighted by the harassment of individuals and church closures. The government of Sudan was the main perpetrator of these abuses, and its unwillingness to reform is a key hurdle to overcome in order to address these concerns. This was highlighted by the lack of progress around key recommendations made by the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan in his report to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in September.

The UK's key human rights objectives for 2014 focused on conflict resolution, humanitarian access and the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. We took action on all three: playing an active role on conflict reduction through our role on the UN Security Council and as part of the "troika" with Norway and the United States; repeatedly pressuring, including at ministerial level, all parties to the conflicts to improve humanitarian access; providing training to the Sudanese Armed Forces on international humanitarian law; and working to build the capacity of civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to document the use of sexual violence in areas of conflict, while supporting the development of systems for delivering comprehensive medical, psychological and legal assistance to survivors. In addition, we have responded to emerging issues. The British Embassy in Khartoum played a central role in maintaining international pressure on the case of Meriam Ibrahim (see below for details). We also continued to work with civil society to broaden the political space and monitor human rights within Sudan, and with international partners, such as the HRC and UN Independent Expert, to raise awareness of the situation in Sudan.

We will continue to focus on conflict resolution and humanitarian access in 2015. Presidential elections are scheduled for April 2015, but the opposition is calling for delays in order to complete the "National Dialogue" process announced by the government of Sudan. Therefore, we will continue to work on this process and to promote peace agreements, including humanitarian access. Through our engagement with civil society, we will seek to broaden political space and to work on key issues including freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. We will also look for opportunities to work with the new UN Independent Expert with a view to helping him develop a constructive and productive relationship with the Sudanese government; it is vital that he builds on the work of his predecessors.

Elections

In January 2014, President Bashir launched a "National Dialogue" that would be open to all political parties, civil

society and rebel groups (if they suspended violence) and that aimed to address the fundamental issues facing the country: conflict, poverty, political reform and national identity. Since its launch, there has been limited progress by the government in achieving its stated intent. The UK made clear its support for a transparent, inclusive and comprehensive process. However, the arrest of opposition leaders and civil society figures continued to raise serious concerns.

Under the Interim National Constitution of Sudan (2005), presidential and parliamentary elections are due to take place in April 2015, and voter registration was completed in November. The opposition maintain that there is insufficient time to complete a comprehensive national dialogue process by April. Many parties stated that they will boycott the elections. Ongoing conflict and other restrictions to fundamental freedoms outlined in this report suggest that the current environment is not conducive to free and fair elections in 2015.

In November, the Presidency submitted a number of amendments to the Interim Constitution (2005) for consideration by the National Assembly, including a proposal for the abolition of elections of state governors.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Political and individual freedoms continued to be restricted by the government during 2014; the activities of civil society organisations were restricted and many reported ongoing harassment by security services. This included raids on offices, confiscation of equipment, and forced closure of organisations. In June, Salmah Women's Resource Centre, one of Sudan's leading women's rights organisations, was closed by the Ministry of Justice.

In the run-up to the anniversary of the September 2013 street demonstrations in Khartoum, the government arrested 80 individuals to ensure that there were no events marking the anniversary. All were released, but some claim they were tortured whilst in detention.

There was ongoing censorship of the press with newspapers shut down – notably al-Saiha, which was closed down for extended periods in June and October – and entire print runs confiscated by the government. Throughout the year, there were regular reports of journalists being questioned, arrested and detained by the security services.

In April, we welcomed a relaxation of restrictions on public meetings of opposition parties, announced in support of the "National Dialogue". These moves were short-lived, however, with the leaders of the National Umma Party, and Sudanese Congress Party, Sadig al-Mahdi and Ibrahim al-Sheikh respectively, detained in May and June for criticising the government's Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Opposition parties experienced harassment by security forces, notably raids on the offices of the Sudanese Congress Party and Sudanese Communist Party. Members of opposition parties faced restrictions on their international travel and leading figures of the National Umma Party, National Consensus Forces, and civil society were detained after signing agreements with the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF). We consistently called for political

detainees to be released, and for freedom of expression to be respected.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

The overall trend showed no improvement in developing the mechanisms of justice and law enforcement, or in addressing concerns about Sudan's laws. We remained concerned over the application of public order laws, with individuals subject to summary trials without access to legal representation. In addition, we were concerned about reports of civilians being tried using military courts.

On 11 March, a Darfuri student, Ali Abaker Musa, was shot and killed by security forces during a rally at the University of Khartoum protesting against attacks on civilians in Darfur. Further smaller protests followed across Khartoum. Police dispersed crowds at his funeral on 12 March and again at a memorial held on 13 March. Although the demonstrations were largely peaceful, the police used tear gas to disperse crowds at both events.

In his report to the HRC in September, the Independent Expert made a number of key recommendations, including reform of the National Security Act of 2010, which he described as "enabling legislation for the National Intelligence and Security Service to encroach on civil and political rights in the Sudan". He also recommended that the government address the issues raised by the Meriam Ibrahim case, as well as highlighting the need for an independent investigation into the September 2013 demonstrations and the March shooting at the University of Khartoum. The government of Sudan took no action to address these recommendations.

The arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against a number of Sudanese nationals for crimes committed in Darfur remain outstanding. On 12 December, the Chief Prosecutor of ICC announced her decision to "hibernate" ongoing investigations due to a lack of progress in bringing the individuals charged to justice. The Prosecutor highlighted the ongoing refusal of the Sudanese government to cooperate with the court.

Death Penalty

Sudan maintains the death penalty for a number of offences, including murder, adultery, sodomy, and alleged political crimes. International attention focused on the case of Meriam Ibrahim, who was sentenced to death for apostasy and her refusal to renounce Christianity. But there were many other cases where the death sentence was enacted for a range of crimes. It is difficult to quantify how often the death penalty was used due to a lack of consistent reporting and the informal justice mechanisms operating in parts of Sudan.

Torture

Torture is prohibited by Sudan's 2005 interim constitution, but there were widespread reports in 2014 of torture being carried out, especially by the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS). The final 12 people held in connection with the September 2013 demonstrations were released on 30 September after the Sudanese judge noted their confessions had been obtained under torture.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

Sudan's internal conflicts continued during 2014. The UK regularly raised its concerns about the ongoing violence and human rights abuses committed by all sides. We have consistently called on all sides to reach a political solution, and to allow unfettered access to humanitarian agencies to all conflict areas to help those displaced by the fighting.

The situation in Darfur continued to deteriorate. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that almost 450,000 people became displaced in 2014, and that over 4.3 million Darfuris were in need of humanitarian assistance.

In South Kordofan and Blue Nile states (the Two Areas), there continued to be reports of Sudanese military aircraft bombing civilians and civilian targets. This resulted in an unquantified number of civilian deaths. This included the bombing of three out of the five hospitals in South Kordofan in May and June. Humanitarian access to opposition-held areas continued to be prevented by government.

There were continuing reports of human rights violations being committed. Of particular concern were the actions of the RSF, but reported attacks by armed opposition groups also resulted in the displacement and deaths of civilians, such as attacks in the eastern part of North Darfur by the Sudan Liberation Army – Minni Minawi. The UN Independent Expert raised concerns on this when he visited Sudan in June, stating: "The activities of armed movements as well as government forces, particularly the RSF, have led to serious human rights violations, including rampaging of villages, destruction of property, as well as sexual and gender-based violence".

The African Union-United Nations Hybrid mission in Darfur (UNAMID) suffered numerous attacks resulting in the death of four UN peacekeepers. The Sudanese government also restricted the movement of UNAMID peacekeepers, including refusing repeat access to Tabit in North Darfur to investigate allegations of mass rape. In addition, on 23 November, the government formally asked UNAMID to close its human rights office in Khartoum.

There were reports of intensified inter-tribal fighting in Darfur and West Kordofan. The largest incident took place in West Kordofan between 28-30 November, with media reporting over 200 deaths. We called on the government of Sudan to investigate and hold those responsible to account.

Humanitarian actors were prevented from carrying out their mandates. On 29 January 2014, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was notified that its activities would be suspended from 1 February. The suspension was lifted in November after sustained lobbying of the Sudanese government. Although some initial agreements have been reached, ICRC's operational activities are yet to resume fully.

Through the Department for International Development (DFID), we worked to ensure that protection was central to the humanitarian response, including through advocating for compliance with both international human rights and international humanitarian law, and ensuring that programming, where possible, prevents and addresses

the consequences of abuse. Despite our calls (including at ministerial level) on government, there was little progress in improving humanitarian access to those in need.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Despite freedom of religion or belief being enshrined in Sudan's 2005 Interim Constitution, the government continues severely to restrict the ability of non-Muslims to practise their religion freely. The continued harassment of individuals, expulsion of foreign practitioners, the destruction of churches, and the government's re-affirmation of its decision not to allow any new churches to be built, all highlight the pressure being applied. Freedom of religion or belief was brought to international attention by the case of Meriam Ibrahim, sentenced to death for apostasy in May. The British Embassy in Khartoum played a key role in monitoring developments. The Embassy attended the court proceedings, liaising closely with the defendant's legal team. This support was recognised by the legal team. Although Meriam Ibrahim's conviction was overturned on appeal, we are aware of other cases where the defendant has announced they will revert to Islam.

Women's Rights

Although women play an active role in public life and a parliamentary quota has been amended to guarantee 30% of seats for female parliamentarians in the National Assembly, women continued to suffer disproportionately under Sudan's legal system. This was highlighted by the case of an Ethiopian woman whose gang rape was filmed by her seven attackers and circulated on social media. She was tried for adultery alongside her attackers and found guilty of indecent acts. Despite clear evidence, the Attorney General blocked her attempts to press rape charges because she was being investigated for a criminal offence.

There were continuing reports of rape being used as a weapon of war in both Darfur and the Two Areas. Prevention of sexual violence is a priority area for the UK's human rights work and we have raised our concerns with the Sudanese government. However, it has not endorsed the UN Declaration on the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict. We highlighted this issue at an event hosted by our Embassy in Khartoum to coincide with the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London in June. We also formed a Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative Consultation Group, comprising leading civil society actors and academics.

The issue of violence against women was highlighted by reports of an alleged mass rape of over 200 women and children by members of the Sudanese Armed Forces in Tabit in North Darfur on 31 October. The full facts around this case are still to be established and the government of Sudan continues to refuse UNAMID further access to Tabit to investigate the allegations.

DFID took an active role in working with the government of Sudan to address Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and supported various initiatives. The government of Sudan participated in the UK Prime Minister's Girl Summit, and signed the summit charter on ending FGM and child, early and forced marriage.

Minority Rights

Individuals from Darfur and the Two Areas have continued to receive discriminatory treatment, particularly with respect to access to education. For example, in October, over 70 Darfuri female students were forcibly evicted from their university dormitories in Khartoum, with at least 16 subsequently detained, in some cases for over a month. There were also media reports of further arrests and detentions of Darfuri students based in Khartoum and Sinnar in Eastern Sudan during December.

LGBT Rights

Homosexual acts are criminalised in Sudan and punishable through fines, flogging, stoning, prison sentences, and even the death penalty. Strict legal sanctions and social stigma created difficulties for the few organisations working to support the LGBT community in Sudan.

Children's Rights

Gaps remain in Sudan's implementation of the Child Act (enacted in 2010), which raises the age of criminal responsibility, criminalises child exploitation and abuse, and prohibits recruitment of children to armed groups. There were credible reports of the continued use of child soldiers, particularly by armed opposition movements in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile.

Other Issues

On social and economic rights, DFID programmes continue to respond by enabling access to basic services such as water and sanitation. In addition, an FCO project provided training to Sudanese entrepreneurs on business and human rights.

Migration issues remained a concern. Sudan is a major transit country for those leaving the Horn of Africa. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 400-500 asylum seekers, mostly Eritreans, cross into eastern Sudan alone on a monthly basis. Most leave the refugee camps and head to Khartoum, where they work illegally to fund their onward journey towards Libya and Europe. Migrants using this route are extremely vulnerable to trafficking and kidnap for exploitation.

In March, Sudan's Human Trafficking Act passed into law. A number of trafficking convictions have since taken place. While welcoming the new act and government steps to combat trafficking, we remain concerned that clauses were inserted to make human trafficking punishable by death. In September, Sudan hosted an African Union meeting on tackling migration in the Horn of Africa, which led to the ministerial launch of the "Khartoum Process" (an EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative) in Rome on 28 November. However, we are aware of recent cases where Sudan failed to meet its international obligations. For example, in July, 74 Eritrean asylum seekers were forcibly returned to Eritrea by the Sudanese authorities, in violation of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 2014 Sudanese Asylum Act.

The status of both South Sudanese refugees who have crossed the border to flee the conflict in South Sudan, and those persons of South Sudanese origin who did not move to

South Sudan following secession, remains undetermined. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 21 December between the Ministry of the Interior and the UNHCR for all these people to be registered. This is yet to be implemented.

Syria

This section covers human rights relating to Syria only. For human rights concerns relating to ISIL, see *"Case Study: ISIL"* on page 55.

The conflict in Syria worsened in 2014. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 76,000 were killed, taking the overall total since the start of the conflict to more than 200,000. Continued conflict led to some of the most appalling human rights and humanitarian conditions in the world, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, denial of access to justice, strict limits on freedom of expression, and persecution of women and minorities. High levels of violence continued throughout the country, particularly in Northern Syria and around the suburbs of Damascus, resulting in deaths, injuries and displacement of civilians.

There were numerous examples of violations of international humanitarian law in Syria, where the armed conflict has lasted nearly four years. The indiscriminate use of weapons by the regime showed no sign of abating in 2014. Regime actions included: indiscriminate bombardment by air and artillery of densely-populated civilian areas (between October and November, regime forces dropped hundreds of barrel bombs in Aleppo, Hasakeh, rural Damascus, Dar'a, Idlib and Hama governorates); the use of chemical weapons; the use of siege and starvation tactics against civilians; denial of humanitarian access; the targeting of communities based on their religious beliefs; and detention of thousands of civilians in appalling conditions, with reports of torture and extrajudicial killings. The delivery of humanitarian assistance remained extremely challenging due to violence and insecurity, shifting conflict lines, and obstructive administrative procedures put in place by the Syrian regime.

There is evidence that extremist armed opposition groups have breached international humanitarian law. They have used explosive weapons in populated areas, including mortars and car bombs and, at times, cut water and electricity supplies to civilian areas, exacerbating an already dire situation. There is also evidence of arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings and the targeting of minority groups.

Overall, we assess that the vast majority of human rights and humanitarian law violations and abuses in 2014 were committed in a systematic way by the Syrian Government Forces and associated military groups.

We believe it is important for a moderate opposition to be able to exist in Syria, and we are providing a range of non-lethal assistance. The recipients of this assistance are carefully selected to ensure that assistance is not being given to those involved in extremist activities or human rights abuses.

In 2014, the UK's response to the crisis was to increase support for the moderate opposition and put more pressure on Assad in order to make progress towards a political settlement, which included our support for the Geneva II peace talks. We also worked to alleviate suffering through an extensive humanitarian programme. In addition, we played a key role in the removal and destruction of the regime's stocks of chemical weapons and supported a range of civil society activists

inside Syria, with the eventual aim of holding those who have committed violations and abuses of international law to account.

However, this activity was set against a backdrop of a worsening conflict and an intransigent Syrian regime, which led to a deteriorating human rights situation overall. We have worked through international partners to seek accountability for those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law, and to press for humanitarian access for those in need. The UK co-sponsored a number of international resolutions, including the UN General Assembly 3rd Committee resolution in November, and UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 2165 and 2191. We consistently called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court and supported efforts in the UN Security Council to achieve this. However, these efforts were blocked by China and Russia. We also supported projects inside Syria, aimed at documenting and addressing violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law, for future potential prosecutions.

In 2015, we will continue efforts to find a political settlement to the conflict. Such a settlement is the only way to reduce suffering, violence and abuses in Syria sustainably. We will also continue to support efforts to document violations and abuses, to highlight these including through international fora, and to press for accountability for those responsible.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

In 2014, the guarantees in the Syrian constitution for freedom of expression and assembly continued to be systematically violated by the regime. State media was tightly controlled and could not deviate from the approved narrative. Protests were routinely met with extreme levels of violence by the regime.

Journalists remained a target of both regime and extremist groups. A report, commissioned by the Committee to Protect Journalists, issued in December, recorded that at least 17 journalists were killed in Syria in 2014, taking the overall number of journalists killed since the conflict began in 2011 to 79. The growing death toll led to Syria becoming the world's deadliest country for journalists for the third year in a row.

Human Rights Defenders

The activities of human rights defenders (HRDs) were severely restricted. They faced a high risk of arbitrary arrest or detention. Enforced disappearances were targeted at those whom the regime considers to be its enemies, including HRDs. The Commission of Inquiry (COI) considers enforced disappearances to constitute a crime against humanity.

There were also cases of prominent activists being taken hostage. On 12 November, regime security forces arrested high-profile Syrian activist Louay Hussein; a further example of the regime's readiness to deny basic rights, freedoms and due process to the thousands detained.

Extremist groups also continued to hold large numbers of activists. Aid workers were targeted for kidnap in 2014, including from a range of Syrian and regional non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who were working for the benefit of the Syrian people.

UK-funded projects worked to build the capacity of HRDs, civil society groups, media, local councils, and others to support transitional justice and good governance, and the documentation of violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Impunity prevailed across Syria with limited access to fair, independent and impartial dispensation of justice, and numerous accounts of enforced disappearances were documented. The COI has reported that the families of many of those "disappeared" by the regime are often too afraid to approach the authorities to inquire about relatives, and have been denied any information about their loved ones, or confronted with administrative hurdles seemingly aimed at deterring them from searching further.

The Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice released a report in cooperation with the Syrian National Coalition in which it highlighted the crime of enforced disappearance. The commission recorded more than 60,000 cases of enforced disappearances from the beginning of the crisis – these include 1,511 women and 1,348 children.

Death Penalty

The secretive nature of the Syrian authorities meant that it was unclear how many people were executed in 2014. However, there were widespread reports of executions and deaths in detention. In January 2014, UK law firm Carter-Ruck and Co published a report which examined a sample of over 55,000 photographs purporting to show the bodies of over 11,000 people detained, visibly tortured, and killed by the regime. It was not possible to determine whether these are extrajudicial killings.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Syria has been a party to the UN Convention against Torture since 2004. But the COI reported that the regime continued to commit torture and other ill-treatment at intelligence agencies' locations, prisons, and military hospitals. Air Force Intelligence has been consistently identified as among the worst perpetrators of torture, although Military Security and other arms of the state were also involved.

Torture techniques include beatings, sexual violence, and the deprivation of food, water, sleep and medical care. The use of torture and other ill-treatment has been used as part of the siege strategy, employed to contain the local population, and is clearly used by the regime as a matter of state policy. There has also been a rise of reported deaths in custody.

The report by Carter-Ruck and Co (see above) states that investigators found that the evidence was credible, and constituted evidence of torture by agents of the Syrian regime. The COI reported that some opposition and extremist groups were using torture, but not on the same scale, or as systematically.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimated that more than 200,000 people had been killed since the conflict

began. The majority of deaths are as a result of indiscriminate or disproportionate shelling of civilian areas by the regime. Regime forces continued to use barrel bombs in densely populated areas, especially in Aleppo, Idlib and Deraa provinces. Between February and June, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented 650 major new sites damaged by barrel bombs in Aleppo alone.

The findings of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact Finding Mission corroborated allegations that the regime continued to use chemical weapons, in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW report notes that chlorine was used “systematically and repeatedly” in a number of incidents which took place in northern Syria in the spring. Witnesses of these attacks consistently confirmed the presence of helicopters at the times of the attacks, leaving little doubt as to regime culpability.

The regime and some opposition groups deliberately obstructed the delivery of humanitarian aid to particular areas. We played a principal role in efforts to improve humanitarian access. In February, our efforts helped the adoption of UNSCR 2139, which demanded unhindered humanitarian access for UN agencies and their partners, including across conflict zones. This continued to be flouted over the months that followed, particularly by the regime.

In July, with strong UK backing, UNSCR 2165 was adopted to allow cross-border aid into Syria, using four specific border crossing points: Bab al-Salam; Bab al-Hawa; Al Yarubiyah; and Ar Ramtha – overriding the need for the regime’s consent. In December, UNSCR 2191 renewed the decisions taken in UNSCR 2165 for a further 12 months.

There appeared to be a deliberate attempt by the Syrian regime to use starvation as a method of warfare, which would constitute a breach of international humanitarian law. The UN estimated in November that some 212,000 people were trapped in areas under siege, with more than 185,000 of those besieged by the regime.

The number of refugees who have fled Syria stood at over 3.3 million by the end of 2014. Meanwhile, there were 12.2 million people within Syria in need of humanitarian aid, an increase of 2.9 million on last year’s figure. The number of internally displaced persons reached 7.6 million. As well as leading to unimaginable suffering in Syria, this placed a major strain on surrounding countries, which faced an enormous influx of vulnerable refugees. The UK helped to lead the international response to the humanitarian crisis, pledging £100 million over the course of the year to support emergency, life-saving humanitarian interventions both within Syria itself and in neighbouring countries. This brought our total commitment to £700 million by the end of 2014, more than the UK has given to any previous humanitarian crisis.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

The continued brutality of the Syrian regime has radicalised many and stoked sectarian tensions. There was a dramatic increase in attacks on religious personnel and buildings by extremist armed groups. For example, a Christian priest, Father Francis Van der Lugt, was shot dead in Homs in April. Historic

churches were used as bases for military operations, and others desecrated, looted or destroyed.

Extremist groups such as ISIL have undermined the right to freedom of religion or belief in Syria. For example, ISIL burned down an Armenian church in Tel Abyad and destroyed a Greek Catholic church in al Raqqa governorate.

Women’s Rights

Syria fell further down the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index and was ranked 139 out of 142 in their 2014 report. In terms of economic participation and opportunity, it ranked 142 out of 142.

Under-reporting made it difficult to make an estimate of the extent of sexual violence. Nonetheless, the COI and others made it clear that both sexual violence and the fear surrounding the issue have been consistent features of the conflict. Government forces used rape in many settings, but the COI suggested that it is most common in prisons and detention centres. This may indicate that its use is institutionalised. The National Coalition estimated that the number of women detainees in regime detention centres doubled over 2014. Women held in regime detention facilities were raped, and threatened with rape or being displayed to male inmates. There were also reports that regime forces arrested and detained women to force surrender, information or confessions from their male relatives. The COI’s August report referred to sexual violence committed by armed opposition groups; for example, taking women hostage for use in prisoner exchanges. However, they did not reach the scale of those committed by the regime. The UK integrated the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative into a range of programmes in Syria. We promoted female roles in policing and civil defence work, and supported the empowerment of women in programmes with Syrian local councils and in gender-based violence programmes within our humanitarian programme.

The COI reported that lack of access to medical care affected the prenatal and postnatal health of women and their children. Women in labour were not allowed to go through regime checkpoints, and were forced to give birth under often dangerous circumstances, without pain medication or sterile conditions.

Many of the most vulnerable households in Syria are supported by women, who often lack necessary assets to meet their needs and those of their children. The UK provided mental health services and psychosocial support, safe spaces, and reproductive health services. Our partners are training healthcare workers to provide appropriate care to rape survivors. We are also providing financial and livelihoods support for vulnerable Syrian women to help reduce their risk of exploitation and forced marriage, while contributing to prevention by raising awareness of girls’ and women’s rights, and engaging men and boys.

The UK has been one of the most prominent advocates of women’s participation in the political process. We helped ensure that women were represented in both regime and opposition delegations at the Geneva II Peace Conference,

as well as helping to build the institutional capacity of independent women's organisations.

Minority Rights and Racism

Estimates from the Minority Rights Group suggested that, in 2011, Syria was 74% Sunni Muslim, 11% Alawite, 10% Christian, 3% Druze and 2% other Muslim. Syria also has a large Kurdish minority which is estimated at 10-15% of the population, as well as other, smaller ethnic minorities, including Turkmen, Assyrians and Armenians. HRW have estimated that 300,000 Kurds in Syria are stateless because of changes to nationality laws in the 1960s. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the number of stateless Kurds may now have fallen to 160,000; however, this is because many have fled the war. Because of the conflict, babies born to Syrian refugee women living in Lebanon and Jordan could end up stateless.

Since the beginning of the uprising in March 2011, ethnic and sectarian tensions have been heightened, as some minorities have been perceived as supporting the regime, and others discriminated against. The regime has sought to exacerbate these tensions and divisions by claiming that the majority Sunni opposition is opposed to a pluralistic Syria. This has led to minority communities being singled out. However, in a brutal, lawless conflict, it is often hard to identify for certain whether groups are targeted for sectarian or racist reasons.

The UK has provided support to the moderate opposition, who have committed to protect all of Syria's communities. We are also supporting non-governmental efforts to promote dialogue between different ethnic and sectarian groups, with a view to a future political settlement.

Children's Rights

The conflict had an appalling and severe impact on children in 2014. The UN Secretary General's Annual Report on Children in Armed Conflict report (CAAC) highlighted the use of weaponry and military tactics by Syrian regime forces, which resulted in countless deaths and the maiming of children, and obstructed children's access to education and health services. Children were murdered, tortured and subjected to violence by all parties. There was also evidence of early forced marriage among girls.

The COI reported that regime groups, Kurdish armed groups, and several armed opposition and extremist groups were responsible for the recruitment and use of children in combat and support roles, as well as conducting military operations, including terror tactics, in civilian-populated areas. Extremist groups such as ISIL, Ahrar Al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra also targeted children to use as hostages for use in prisoner exchanges. It also noted widespread reports of children as young as 13 being held and tortured or executed by the regime.

The COI reported that regime sieges resulted in young children suffering severe malnutrition, and that children were detained with adults and subjected to torture. In July, a dozen schools were shelled, leading to the death and wounding of children in several governorates. According to the COI, regime forces also used schools for military purposes. The militarisation

of schools and use of children by pro-regime armed groups violates the commitment of Syria to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Over 7.2 million children are in need across the region. An estimated 5.6 million children in Syria are living in dire situations, over 2.5 million children in Syria are not attending school, and over 1.6 million refugee children need access to education. As part of our broader humanitarian effort, we are supporting organisations in Syria and the region for the "No Lost Generation" initiative, which aims to increase support, and protection for Syrian children. This includes education, psycho-social support, and community-based child protection initiatives.

Turkmenistan

We continued to have significant concerns about the human rights situation in Turkmenistan, and there was little meaningful progress during 2014. The Turkmen authorities were publicly committed to a policy of gradual reform, but there was little evidence to suggest that the situation would improve significantly in the immediate future. Turkmenistan is a signatory to most international human rights instruments, and has a constitution and laws which provide for the protection of those rights. However, its record on implementation is poor. The UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern in March 2012 about torture, degrading treatment, and lack of freedom of assembly and association. There has been little change since then. There is no independent media, and internet access is limited. Corruption and lack of transparency remain serious and widespread problems. And Turkmenistan needs to make much more progress towards a genuinely pluralistic political system.

Our objectives for 2014 were to continue to use high-level engagement – including through international partners such as the EU, the Organisation for Security & Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN – to encourage Turkmenistan to do more to meet its international human rights obligations; and to support projects to encourage better governance and human rights reform. The British Ambassador raised concerns bilaterally in contacts with the Turkmen Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Institute of Democracy & Human Rights, and Turkmenistan's Religious Council. Our concerns have also been reflected in key EU statements such as those at the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna in February and May. In parallel, the British Embassy worked on a number of reform-related projects during the year, including one through UN Development Programme (UNDP) to assist Turkmenistan in formulating a National Human Rights Action Plan. This plan, due to be published in 2015, should address action points arising from Turkmenistan's second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2013. Details of other projects supported by the Embassy are included in the thematic sections below. Our efforts have had only a modest impact to date, but we believe it important to continue engagement to support and keep attention focused on the need for more and faster reform.

In 2015, the UK will continue to raise issues of concern both bilaterally and alongside partners in the EU, OSCE and UN. We will also continue to seek to encourage and support reform in Turkmenistan, helping in whatever way we can, as was made clear by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for Central Asia, Tobias Ellwood, during a meeting in London in November with Turkmenistan's visiting Minister for Education.

Elections

2014 saw no substantial progress towards political pluralism and a genuine opposition. In March, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) report into the December 2013 parliamentary elections noted that, "the elections took place in a strictly controlled political environment characterised by a lack of respect for fundamental freedoms that are central to democratic elections". They concluded that the elections needed to be "significantly improved to live up

to OSCE commitments and other international obligations for genuine and democratic elections".

ODIHR outlined a list of 30 recommendations to help Turkmenistan improve its electoral system, and made clear the OSCE's readiness to assist the authorities in following them up. The leader of ODIHR's Election Assessment Mission visited Turkmenistan at the end of May, and held discussions with officials from Turkmenistan's Parliament on the scope for further cooperation on electoral reform. In December, visiting Special Representatives from the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly noted that Turkmenistan still needed to make progress in a number of spheres, and emphasised the importance of engaging civil society in the process. A long-awaited second political group – the Agrarian Party – was formed on 28 September. However, as things stand, it will do little to redress the democratic deficit in Turkmenistan.

The British Embassy supported a project through UNDP to try to enhance Turkmenistan's electoral framework through a series of capacity-building activities involving election officials, media, women candidates and observers, and to increase public awareness of elections, political parties and public organisations. Turkmenistan next goes to the polls in a presidential election due in 2017.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

The media continued to be tightly controlled, and dissenting opinion suppressed. NGO Freedom House ranked Turkmenistan 195 out of 197 countries in its 2014 Freedom of the Press index, and Reporters Without Borders ranked Turkmenistan 178 out of the 180 countries it covers. International newspapers and other foreign written media are not readily available in Turkmenistan. Internet services remained underdeveloped and strictly controlled, with less than 10% of the population currently having access. The Turkmen government routinely blocked sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. However, satellite dishes capable of receiving Russian, Turkish and other international news and entertainment channels are readily available and widely used. The British Embassy funded a small project, through the OSCE Centre-in-Ashgabat, to enhance the professional skills of domestic journalists and media specialists. The project included a study visit by five Turkmen journalists to Lithuania to observe modern journalism practices, and a four-day training course in Ashgabat on best practice in modern journalism.

Despite the existence of legal provisions on the right to freedom of assembly, the authorities rarely allow citizens to exercise that right freely, and public protest is extremely rare.

Human Rights Defenders

Human rights defenders (HRDs) are unable to operate in Turkmenistan, and the registration process for NGOs is complex, bureaucratic, and subject to arbitrary state assessment. Unregistered NGO activity is punishable by fines, short-term detention and confiscation of property.

The EU expressed deep concern about the situation of civil society and of HRDs in Turkmenistan in a statement at the OSCE Permanent Council in May. The EU urged the Turkmen authorities to comply fully with international commitments on

freedom of association, including those relating to regulation of domestic NGOs and facilitating access for international NGOs. The EU also called for Turkmen participation in the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw, and engagement with civil society, including on issues such as the “[Prove They Are Alive Campaign](#)”. Despite this, the Turkmen government again refused to attend because, they contend, certain exiled individuals who attended the meeting are guilty of criminal offences in Turkmenistan. The EU noted in its [closing statement](#) at HDIM that Turkmenistan had missed “a valuable opportunity for an open and frank dialogue on this and other issues”, encouraged future engagement by Turkmenistan, and repeated concerns about the practice of enforced disappearances and the treatment of political prisoners in Turkmenistan.

The EU remained particularly concerned about ongoing uncertainty over the fate of a number of individuals convicted between December 2002 and January 2003 in trials relating to the alleged coup in 2002. The EU therefore encouraged Turkmenistan – including at the OSCE Permanent Council in February – to respond to recommendations made in the report of the fact-finding mission established in 2002 by the invocation of the OSCE’s Moscow Mechanism (which led to an inconclusive investigation into the fate of individuals said to have been involved in the November 2002 incident).

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

We will continue to raise with the Turkmen authorities the importance of the rule of law, including lobbying on individual cases where appropriate. It remains difficult for individuals to challenge court decisions. We have yet to see evidence of an improvement in prison conditions. Corruption and a general lack of transparency remain a problem in Turkmenistan. [Transparency International](#) ranked Turkmenistan 169 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in its 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Death Penalty

Turkmenistan abolished the death penalty in 1999 and again co-sponsored the biennial resolution on a “Moratorium on the use of the Death Penalty”, which was adopted at the UN General Assembly on 21 November. The UK welcomed this support for the global advocacy effort against the death penalty.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

We continued to have serious concerns about reports that security officials tortured and beat detainees to extract confessions and as a form of punishment. This remained an issue high on the agenda of civil society stakeholders. However, we welcomed Turkmenistan’s undertaking, in the context of its UPR, to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

International bodies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are denied unfettered access to detention facilities in Turkmenistan. We are, however, encouraged that the Turkmen authorities again allowed limited access to selected detention centres by the ICRC and, for the first time,

by the OSCE Centre-in-Ashgabat. The UK encourages further such engagement with international organisations and experts.

Prison conditions on the whole are unsanitary, overcrowded and unsafe and the nutritional value of prison food is poor. Some facilities are located in areas of extremely harsh climate conditions. The Turkmen government has declared its intention to modernise existing penitentiary facilities and build new ones according to international standards. The British Embassy conducted a project through the OSCE Centre-in-Ashgabat and Penal Reform International (PRI) to enable senior law-enforcement officials from Turkmenistan to learn about prison management in the UK. Participants discussed PRI’s work on torture prevention, complaints and inspection mechanisms, criminal justice issues and penal reform, as well as offender rehabilitation and treatments for drug-users in prison. The UK will continue to encourage the Turkmen authorities to allow full and independent access to detention facilities and individual prisoners.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Although the constitution of Turkmenistan does not prescribe a state religion and provides for religious freedom, the practice of religion is largely government-controlled. Any religious organisation wishing to operate must register with the authorities, but bureaucratic and other hurdles make obtaining registration difficult. Even those organisations that have registered can find it difficult to operate, due to government constraints on opening new premises and on the size of services. Turkmen law prohibits proselytising and the publication of religious literature. The import of any religious publication has to be approved by the Council of Religious Affairs, and such approvals are difficult to obtain. Individuals and religious communities still experience administrative restrictions or various other forms of harassment.

In 2014 we received further credible reports of harassment from the authorities against Jehovah’s Witnesses. Both we and EU partners again raised the issue with the Turkmen authorities and emphasised the importance of Turkmenistan abiding by its international commitments and obligations. We are pleased therefore that eight Jehovah’s Witnesses were released in October as part of a presidential amnesty.

The OSCE Centre-in-Ashgabat has worked with the government of Turkmenistan on a number of other important initiatives relating to freedom of religion and belief. It organised a training course in May on international standards on freedom of religion or belief. Led by two international experts from the UK, the course brought together 23 participants, including members of Turkmenistan’s parliament (Mejlis), representatives of the Council of Religious Affairs, the National Institute of Democracy & Human Rights, and law enforcement bodies. In November, there was a five-day working visit to Belgium for Turkmen officials to learn more about international standards and national practices on freedom of religion and belief. The UK will continue to use suitable opportunities to raise with the government of Turkmenistan the importance of respecting the fundamental and universal values of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

Women's Rights

A cultural bias against reporting or acknowledging rape and domestic violence makes determining the extent of these problems in Turkmenistan difficult. The OSCE continued to support women's rights in Turkmenistan. It held seminars in February and July for policy-makers and law-enforcement officials to raise participants' awareness about women's empowerment and the importance of gender mainstreaming in the development of public policy. Participants were also informed about international treaties and other instruments covering these issues, as well as OSCE commitments for the promotion of gender equality. The UK will look for opportunities to support this work in the years ahead.

Minority Rights

As a result of legal and other measures designed to reinforce Turkmenistan's national identity, some minority groups within the country (particularly ethnic Uzbeks and Russians) find it difficult to preserve their national and linguistic identity and exercise freedom of travel, as a result of bureaucratic obstacles relating to those holding dual nationality. Despite a legal framework which provides for equal rights and freedoms for all citizens, Turkmen citizens belonging to ethnic minorities are mostly excluded from government jobs even if they speak Turkmen. A presidential decree requires that at least 70% of personnel employed by an organisation have to be Turkmen. However, Turkmenistan undertook, in the context of its second UPR, to consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.

LGBT Rights

Same-sex relations between men are punishable by imprisonment (from two to 20 years), whilst those between women are not mentioned in the Criminal Code. Although this provision is rarely applied, homophobia is widespread, and LGBT individuals hide their sexual orientation to avoid discrimination. Despite encouragement to the contrary, Turkmenistan refused, in the context of its latest UPR, to decriminalise sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex.

Other Issues

EU/Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue

The annual EU-Turkmenistan Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels in September covered the situation in detention centres in Turkmenistan (including reports of mistreatment of detainees, overcrowding, and poor conditions), freedom of expression, women's rights, and cooperation with international organisations. The EU welcomed some positive legislative reforms, and encouraged Turkmenistan to move forward with the adoption of a National Human Rights Action Plan. The EU also raised serious concerns about continued reports of grave human rights violations in Turkmenistan, including the torture and mistreatment of detainees, enforced disappearances, press censorship and blocking of websites, excessive restrictions on civil society, and violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief. Individual cases were also raised. The next round of the dialogue should take place in Ashgabat in 2015.

Uzbekistan

Overall, there was little change in Uzbekistan's human rights situation during 2014. We continued to have significant concerns, including on the lack of freedom of expression, constraints on the ability to exercise civil and political rights, allegations of the use of torture by law enforcement officials, and limitations placed on freedom of religion or belief. Such violations continued to be reported by human rights organisations in 2014. Human rights defenders (HRDs) and journalists were subject to pressure and mistreatment, and a significant number remain imprisoned. No UN Special Rapporteur has been able to visit Uzbekistan since 2002; there are currently 11 outstanding requests for invitations. There were, however, positive developments on the issues of child and forced labour, and some limited steps to improve transparency and accountability within government.

One of our key objectives for 2014 was to encourage the development and implementation of a National Action Plan on Human Rights (NAP), which we see as a potentially useful tool to help address a range of serious human rights challenges. This is something on which the National Human Rights Centre of Uzbekistan committed to work with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Tashkent and international partners in 2013. This will form a programme of action designed to implement the 121 recommendations that Uzbekistan accepted at its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2013. A final text of the NAP, approved within the Uzbek government, is still awaited. It is hoped that once it is issued, a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between UNDP and the Uzbek government on cooperation in its implementation. In addition, during 2014, we continued to share UK expertise and best practice in a number of areas, particularly in combating torture and mistreatment in detention. Human rights concerns were raised during a visit to Uzbekistan in April by former Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Warsi, and, more recently by FCO Minister for Central Asia, Tobias Ellwood, in a meeting with Uzbekistan's Ambassador to the UK.

The Uzbek government's official approach to human rights continues to be guided by the "Concept for the Further Deepening of Democratic Reforms and Establishment of Civil Society" adopted in 2010, and we expect this to be an important theme for 2015. Legislative changes were made at the end of 2013 and during 2014 that were presented as furthering the aims of the "Concept". These include the law on "social partnerships", designed to facilitate interaction between the state and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and a law on the "transparency of government bodies", designed to improve communication between civil society and government authorities. The latter piece of legislation appears to be a positive step, the implementation of which we are supporting with FCO programme funds. Furthermore, following parliamentary elections of December, 2015 will see the formation of a new government and presidential elections, under amended constitutional arrangements which have been presented as a move towards greater democracy. In addition, in 2015 we will continue to support the implementation of the NAP, and work with the Uzbek authorities on torture prevention issues.

Elections

Parliamentary elections were held on 21 December. A limited election observation mission of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) judged in its *Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions* that the elections were competently administered, but lacked genuine electoral competition and debate. Four parties were registered to contest the elections, all of them supportive of and supported by the government. ODIHR noted that recent legislative amendments, in combination with minor administrative improvements and the nomination of younger candidates by all political parties, were presented as steps towards strengthening the role of parliament, and creating a more competitive political environment. They did not, however, address concerns with regard to the fundamental freedoms that are critical for elections to fully meet international commitments and standards, in particular freedom of expression and association. ODIHR also noted a widespread practice of proxy voting on behalf of several voters.

Under legislation passed in early 2014, the majority party will, for the first time, have the right to nominate a candidate for the post of the Prime Minister, and the new government will be required to present its plans to parliament for approval.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and media. However, legislation prohibits the publication or broadcast of materials that may be perceived by the authorities, under broad criteria, to subvert constitutional or social order. In practice, the state continues to control much of the print media and domestic news agencies. Any online opposition or criticism of the government is carried on websites that operate outside the country. In its 2014 press freedom index, Reporters Without Borders placed Uzbekistan at 166 out of the 179 countries it covers, down from 164 in 2013. In August, the Senate approved revisions to the “law on informatization” which obliges bloggers to report only verified information and to remove, on demand from the authorities, any non-compliant material. The OSCE stated that these amendments contravene international standards on freedom of expression. There remains minimal opportunity for Uzbek citizen to exercise their right to peaceful assembly due to laws that prevent large gatherings.

Human Rights Defenders

We continued to call for the release of all imprisoned HRDs, political prisoners and independent journalists, both bilaterally and through the EU. We requested that a number of individual cases be considered for amnesty on humanitarian grounds on Constitution Day, due to reports of their continuing ill health. They were Said Ashurov, Salijon Abdurakhmanov, Akzam Turgunov, Erkin Musaev, Azamjon Formonov, and Murad Juraev, who was sentenced in 1995 to 12 years’ imprisonment, but has since received four additional sentences. As part of the amnesty in 2014, Khasan Choriev (the father of the founder of the independent Birdamlik movement), and HRDs Nematjon Siddikov and Turaboy Djurabaev were released from prison in January. Khasan Choriev subsequently died in March.

In November, representatives from Human Rights Watch (HRW) made their first visit to Uzbekistan since the closure of their office in Tashkent in 2011. The Embassy met HRW representatives during their visit, which followed the publication of their report “*Until the Very End*”. This profiled the cases of 34 individuals, including those mentioned above, who have been imprisoned for what the report describes as politically motivated charges.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Challenges in relation to trials and detention continued, including restrictions on civil society representatives attending trials and defendants’ lack of access to legal advice. We raised additional concerns over the use of Article 221 of the Criminal Code, which allows for additional sentences to be imposed for violation of prison rules. Human rights organisations, including HRW in its recent report, reported that some detainees received lengthy additional sentences for allegedly minor infringements. These included Murad Juraev, whose original sentence expired in 2007, but who received four additional sentences under Article 221, and is now due for release in 2015; and Mukhammed Begjanov, who was sentenced in 2012 to an additional five years and 29 days’ imprisonment under the same article. In their report, HRW refer to 14 cases of such additional sentences, including Juraev and Begjanov.

The authorities announced plans to reduce the prison population by making more use of house arrests and through legislation aimed at preventing crime by strengthening the links between state and non-state bodies. However, concerns have been raised that this has a wide scope, which provides potential for misuse and contravention of the human rights treaties to which Uzbekistan is party. Further initiatives included improving oversight of the courts, and increasing the number of hearings and salaries of judges and court officials. In 2014, the EU concluded a €10 million criminal justice reform project, launched in February 2012. UK specialists played a significant part in the policing and prisons components of the project.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

There were credible reports from human rights organisations on persistent cases of torture and mistreatment by security forces and prison personnel. For example Mirsobir Khamidkariev and Nilufar Rahimjonova were allegedly subjected to torture or ill treatment in detention. Nilufar Rahimjonova died in custody in September while serving a sentence on what human rights organisations have reported as “politically motivated charges”. Restrictions on access of international organisations to prisons and detention centres made investigating these allegations difficult. We continued to raise with Uzbekistan the need to make provisions on torture in its criminal code compatible with Article 1 of the UN Convention Against Torture, to ensure that perpetrators are held to account, and to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. The Embassy supported Uzbekistan’s National Human Rights Centre and Ombudsman with efforts to prevent torture through the creation of a National Preventive Mechanism.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

According to official statistics, over 200 organisations of several different religious groups exist in Uzbekistan, but lengthy delays in registering new groups are frequently reported. Whilst Uzbekistan's constitution protects freedom of religion or belief, harassment of individuals, and raids on communities practising their faith outside state controls continued. These led to prosecutions of individuals on charges of religious extremism, and criminalisation of unregistered religious activity.

Children's Rights

The international community expressed longstanding concerns about the use of child and forced labour in Uzbekistan during the cotton harvest. However, there has been significant progress over the last three years in addressing the issue of child labour. During the 2014 cotton harvest, as in 2013, there appeared to have been no systematic mobilisation of under-16s; and, in 2014, there were significant efforts to reduce the presence of 16-18 year olds. We welcomed these efforts. Large-scale mobilisation of adults continued, but Uzbekistan is committed to working with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to implement a Decent Work Country Programme for 2014-2016 agreed in April. This aims to support Uzbekistan in implementing ILO Convention 105 on forced labour. The ILO declared that, for the first time since 2010, Uzbekistan would be exempt from appearing before the ILO monitoring body that supervises the implementation of ratified labour conventions.

Vietnam

In 2014, Vietnam's membership of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and engagement with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process provided an opportunity to show its commitment to improving human rights. The National Assembly ratified two UN conventions: the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Progress was also achieved on LGBT rights. However, significant concerns remained in the UK's priority areas for engagement in Vietnam: freedom of expression and the death penalty. Lack of transparency and accountability continued to impede serious progress. Legal instruments such as Articles 79, 88 and 258 of the Penal Code were used arbitrarily to restrict the exercise of civil and political rights. We encouraged the Vietnamese authorities to make early progress in bringing such laws, and their use, into line with the new constitution.

Vietnam participated in the UPR during 2014. They received 227 recommendations and accepted 182, including those on: creating an independent national human rights institution; granting legal status to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups; and allowing more room for non-state media. They rejected UK recommendations to issue a standing invite to all UN Special Rapporteurs and to reduce the number of crimes subject to the death penalty by December 2014. Vietnam's mainly positive engagement with the UPR process was not matched by efforts to follow it up. Some events were stopped, some moved venue due to pressure from authorities, and others took place without official participation. The UK welcomed Vietnam's invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, but was concerned at the intimidation and surveillance of individuals he had planned to meet during his visit.

The UK, working with the EU and like-minded countries, had some success in lobbying for the release of political prisoners, including human rights defenders (HRDs) Dinh Dang Dinh and Cu Huy Ha Vu. We also lobbied for the release of HRD Mai Thi Dung on humanitarian grounds, but she remains in detention.

2015 will begin with the EU-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue in January and continue with further UPR follow-up events. The UK will work with the Vietnamese authorities and wider civil society to generate public, media and parliamentary debate on the death penalty. This will be timely as Vietnam is undertaking a revision of its Penal Code.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Freedom of expression and assembly continued to be a major concern. We assess that both political and human rights activists continued to be arrested and sentenced for expressing peaceful opinions.

In January 2014, HRD Dinh Dang Dinh was released on compassionate grounds after lobbying by the UK, the EU and other like-minded countries. With EU member states, the UK also supported representations by the EU Delegation to the Ministry of Public Security on the case of HRD Cu Huy Ha Vu. We believe this contributed to Vu's release in April.

We welcomed the release of 12 political prisoners in 2014, which included high-profile cases such as the blogger Nguyen Van Hai, also known as “Dieu Cay”. He was immediately deported to the US on his release in October.

However, 55 prisoners remained on the EU’s “persons of concern” list, with combined sentences totalling 295 years, whilst arrests of political and human rights activists continued. Prominent bloggers Nguyen Huu Vinh, also known as “Anh Ba Sam”, and Hong Le Tho were arrested in May and November respectively. In December, two bloggers, Nguyen Quang Lap and Nguyen Dinh Ngoc, were arrested. Lap, also known as “Bo Lap”, whose blog “Que Choa” contained articles criticising the government, was arrested under Article 258, which criminalises the “misuse of democratic freedoms to attack state interests and the legitimate rights and interests of collectives and citizens”. The reasons for the arrest of Nguyen Dinh Ngoc, also known as Nguyen Ngoc Gia, have not been made public, but he was a frequent contributor to human rights blogs.

There were examples throughout the year of official interference in civil society-led UPR events, set up to discuss how Vietnam could implement the UPR recommendations it had accepted. Invitees were blocked from attending some events, HRDs were harassed, and one venue was forced to cancel an event. Some examples of intimidation include separate attacks in May on two HRDs: Nguyen Van Dai was attacked with glass in a cafe, and Tran Thi Nga was attacked by five assailants with iron bars in Hanoi. The EU lobbied strongly on both cases and, as a result, there was an investigation by the Ministry of Public Security.

The UK supported a media project by The Asia Foundation through the FCO Human Rights and Democracy Programme. The aim of the project was to improve investigative journalism and public debate by discussing and assessing infrastructure projects and their impact on the environment. The project, currently in its final year, has already resulted in the publication of over 100 reports in the media, including a news article on prime-time national television.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

There is a lack of transparency and accountability throughout the legal system. We are concerned that the state uses the courts to punish dissidents by prosecuting them on unrelated matters. For example, in the case of Le Quoc Quan, whose sentence to 30 months in prison for tax evasion was upheld in February, the UK assessed that he was imprisoned for voicing his opinions on religion, corruption and land reform, and that his trial was unfair.

In the wake of Le Quoc Quan’s trial, the UK issued a statement reminding Vietnam of its obligations to uphold freedom of expression. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and lobby the Vietnamese authorities throughout 2015.

Death Penalty

There was no substantial progress in reducing the use of the death penalty in Vietnam during 2014, although there was an encouraging willingness to allow public debate on the issue. Death sentences continued to be imposed and carried out, following the lifting of a de facto moratorium in 2013. The UK

remains concerned at the range of crimes punishable by death and the number of death sentences imposed.

Accurate information about the number of executions that take place and the number of people awaiting execution remains scarce, since such information is treated as a state secret. At the beginning of 2014, 30 individuals were sentenced to death following a single trial for smuggling drugs. The UK supported an [EU statement](#) condemning the outcome and calling for a moratorium on executions to be reinstated.

The UK lobbied Vietnam to reduce the number of offences punishable by death. In February the Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, Lord Dubs, visited Vietnam. He was able to speak to a wide range of interlocutors, from civil society to government, prompting several lively debates on the death penalty and on the scope for reducing the number of crimes that warrant a death sentence. In September, the UK participated in a conference on the death penalty involving national and international experts, the Vietnamese authorities, including the National Assembly, and civil society groups.

A potential miscarriage of justice case sparked public debate in 2014. Ho Duy Hai was convicted in 2008 for the murder of two post office workers. However, his supporters claimed that he was innocent and that the evidence presented, including fingerprints found at the scene, was inconclusive and did not incriminate him. The case received national media interest as an apparent miscarriage of justice. This is an encouraging development, as such subjects are not usually discussed openly in Vietnam. The case is now being reviewed by the Vietnamese authorities.

In 2015, Vietnam is due to revise its Penal Code, which represents an opportunity to revisit sentencing policy and the number of crimes that attract the death penalty. The UK and international partners will continue to make the case for abolition of the death penalty or, failing that, a moratorium on executions and a reduction in the number of crimes that attract the death penalty.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

Most people in Vietnam are able to practise their religion of choice, or none. Freedom of assembly or expression, or political issues, such as land rights, can be a cause of tensions between some religious organisations and the authorities. We had concerns, however, about an increasing number of anecdotal reports of intimidation of religious minorities in rural areas by local authorities.

The invitation by the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Heiner Bielefeldt, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, to visit Vietnam in July was a welcome move. He underlined the progress that Vietnam had made to ensure there was space for religious groups to practise, and recognised that the problems that do exist are often linked to other issues. However, intimidation of activists seeking to meet the Special Rapporteur disrupted his visit, and meant that he was unable to complete planned field visits to certain areas to investigate reports on the harassment of ethnic minorities for practising their religion.

British Embassy officials met religious leaders before the Special Rapporteur's visit to discuss problems in rural areas; they will continue to meet a broad section of religious groups as part of their wider human rights work.

Women's Rights

In many respects, Vietnam made excellent progress in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, in 2014, women continued to face unofficial discrimination or disadvantage in multiple aspects of daily life, ranging from son-preference, lower representation in politics and decision-making, unequal access to educational and economic opportunities, and high rates of gender-based violence. The UK provided a range of support, including a focus on job creation and support to victims of violence.

Minority Rights

Though Vietnam's record on economic growth and poverty reduction over the last two decades has been remarkable, ethnic minority groups have not benefited proportionately. Although these groups make up less than 15% of the population, they accounted for 47% of the poor and 68% of the extreme poor in 2010 – and the gap between minority populations and the ethnic majority continues to widen. The UK included a particular focus on minorities in its development programmes, including efforts to monitor and increase awareness about the remaining challenges, as well as support to the education and social assistance system.

LGBT Rights

In general there was encouraging progress in respect of LGBT rights in Vietnam, a trend which seems set to continue in 2015. Although they did not grant official permission, the authorities allowed the Gay Pride event in Hanoi in August to go ahead, as well as similar activities in May to celebrate the LGBT community in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Vietnam voted in support of a resolution on "sexual orientation and gender identity" at the 27th session of the HRC in September. However, they did not include recognition of same-sex cohabitation and joint custody for children in the Draft Law on Marriage and Family Law.

The UK supported civil society action in support of LGBT rights and Embassy representatives attended a popular civil society event celebrating International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in Hanoi. The UK will continue to encourage Vietnam to permit the community to hold events and press for a greater extension of freedoms in law.

Children's Rights

In terms of its legal framework, Vietnam covers most of its commitments as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child well. However, implementation remains poor. In December, the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs submitted a proposal for better child protection, care and education. Vietnam signed up to the Statement of Action of the #WePROTECT Children Online summit in London in December, thereby committing to developing its own version

of the Child Abuse Image Database, or contributing to an international database, such as that run by Interpol.

Yemen

Human rights violations in Yemen continued on a large-scale in 2014, including widespread conflict affecting civilians; the use of child soldiers; child marriage and discrimination against women; restrictions on the media; religious persecution; use of the death penalty; and serious delays in drafting the new constitution and preparing for elections. Yemen is not expected to achieve its Millennium Development Goals on poverty and hunger; gender equality; and maternal health by 2015, and is ranked 154 out of 187 countries in the 2013 UN Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index.

Regrettably, the political, security and humanitarian situations deteriorated in 2014, particularly in the second part of the year, which seriously impeded the government's and civil society's capacity to protect human rights. Key events included: fighting between Ansar Allah/the Houthis and pro-Islah/Salafi armed groups; the Houthi take-over of key government institutions and territory; continued assassinations and bomb attacks against civilian, political and security targets by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and other armed groups; and interference by the former President and members of his regime.

Some progress was made – the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) concluded in January 2014, and agreed a number of principles to build the capacity of the state to safeguard human rights, increase gender equality, and end child marriage. Laws on children's rights and human trafficking were drafted, and a government action plan to end the use of child soldiers was agreed. A draft National Human Rights Strategy was also developed.

The appointment of a new government in November, following the 21 September Peace and National Partnership Agreement, was a positive step, with many ministers having technocratic, rather than primarily political, backgrounds. Institutional capacity, however, remained weak, reducing their ability to deliver timely reforms.

The UK continued its human rights work through lobbying, awareness raising and programme work on human rights priorities, including democracy and elections; access to justice and the rule of law; women's and children's rights; and protection of civilians. We lobbied the government during Yemen's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in January, and sponsored the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights in September. The UK government Special Envoy to Yemen, Sir Alan Duncan, lobbied the government on human right issues during visits to Sana'a, and the UK Ambassador to Yemen published a series of blogs to raise awareness of human rights issues, including women's rights, corruption, conflict and the protection of civilians, and refugees, and raised these in her meetings with political parties.

We also funded a number of human rights projects: to date the Department for International Development (DFID) has contributed £10 million through multi-donor UN Trust Funds to provide operational and technical support to the NDC, constitution drafting process, and election preparations. The

Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) funded projects on gender and security, child marriage, and youth engagement.

As co-chair of the Friends of Yemen Group, the UK hosted and co-chaired the seventh ministerial meeting in London, and co-chaired the eighth meeting in New York. The group urged progress on the constitution drafting process, in line with the outcomes from the NDC, and roll-out of the new biometric voter registry, as well as establishing technical working groups to provide more targeted assistance to the Yemeni government in support of reforms.

Looking ahead to 2015, large-scale violations of human rights are expected to continue, including unlawful detentions; use of child soldiers, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, and extrajudicial killings. For human rights in Yemen to improve, the government needs to work in partnership with all political elements and civil society organisations to implement the recommendations made by the NDC, adhere to its obligations under international law, and influence the public's attitudes towards human rights. The NDC's recommendations need to be included in the new constitution, and relevant legislation – such as the Child Rights Law – should be enshrined into law. The constitutional referendum and national elections will hopefully put in place a legitimate and inclusive government that can build the political, security and judicial institutions needed to protect human rights in the long term.

The UK will continue to support the government and civil society to improve human rights. We will work through the HRC, the Embassy and Special Envoy to lobby and raise awareness on priority issues, and explore possibilities for new human rights projects. DFID will continue programmes to help address the drivers of conflict and poverty, the key causes of many human rights violations. DFID will also launch a new civil society programme to help citizens hold government to account for public services, and support excluded women and youth to participate in the political process.

Elections

Political choice in Yemen continued to be limited. Progress on constitution drafting and election preparations was seriously delayed due to a lack of political consensus. The UK welcomed the first draft of the new constitution, and urged all parties to agree to it, in line with the NDC recommendations.

We contributed £5.3 million to support multi-donor efforts to help the Supreme Commission for Election and Referenda (SCER) in its work to deliver the constitutional referendum and biometric voter registration, and £1 million to the Constitutional Drafting Committee (CDC). We also continued to play a key role, bilaterally and through the Group of Ten Ambassadors, in encouraging political progress, including through the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative, which led to elections. We also co-sponsored sanctions, under UN Security Council Resolution 2140, against former President Saleh and two Houthi military commanders for disrupting the political transition and inciting violence.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

Freedom of expression and assembly remained limited in 2014, with freedom of speech subject to government censorship, and

incidents of violence towards journalists and media outlets. Reporters Without Borders ranked Yemen 167 out of 180 in its 2014 Press Freedom Index. The Freedom Foundation reported 359 violations against journalists and media outlets in 2014, ranging from verbal harassment, destruction and confiscation of equipment, unlawful detention and murder. The Freedom Foundation reported that the government and other armed groups were either complicit in the attacks, and/or failed to investigate cases.

The Al-Yemen Al-Youm TV and newspaper were raided and temporarily closed by government forces in June; the privately-owned Suhail TV station was ransacked, its broadcasting stopped and employees detained by the Houthis in September; and the state-owned TV compound in Sana'a was also shelled during the Houthi attack on Sana'a in September, and its equipment ransacked. Western journalists found it difficult to get visas for Yemen and the American journalist, Adam Baron, was deported in May. Abdul Rahman Hamid Al-Din from Sana'a radio was shot and killed in August, and American journalist Luke Somers was murdered by AQAP during an unsuccessful rescue attempt in December. Government forces also used lethal force during a Houthi demonstration in Sana'a in September which killed eight and injured at least 67.

The UK lobbied the Minister of Interior, and co-sponsored a statement by international Ambassadors in Sana'a in June, calling on the government and media bodies to agree a code of conduct to hold organisations to ethical standards. We urged the government to investigate violations against all journalists and media outlets, review cases of detention, and to pass the new draft law on Press and Publications. We also urged the government to investigate the killing of the Houthi protestors in Sana'a and to hold those responsible to account.

The UK welcomed the appointment of former Yemen Times editor, Nadia al-Sakkaf, as Minister of Information in November. Early meetings indicated more systematic, open and fair engagement with the media, including international journalists. Ms al-Sakkaf and her advisors, however, were subject to Houthi intimidation and threats, and Houthis also seized the state-run al-Thawra newspaper on 16 December.

Human Rights Defenders

Yemenis experienced extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, and political imprisonments. The Houthis allegedly detained individuals in illegal detention centres in Sana'a and other northern governorates. In Al-Dhale and Amran governorates, government forces used excessive force against civilians causing a number of deaths. Khaled Al-Junaidi – a southern activist – was killed by government forces in Aden in December, and the investigation committee has not released any findings. Houthi protesters were killed and injured by government forces during a demonstration outside the Cabinet building in Sana'a in September. Houthi representative at the NDC Ahmed Sharif al-Din was also killed by unknown gunman on 21 January.

A number of individuals – detained for their involvement in the 2011 protests and Presidential Mosque bombing – remained imprisoned. The government also failed to begin investigations of alleged violations of human rights in 2011, including

establishing a presidentially decreed commission of inquiry, and passing the law on Transitional Justice.

The UK was active in helping to protect human rights defenders. A Conflict Pool project, led by Mercy Corps, on youth engagement helped increase the role of young people in community-level decision making in Taiz. During a visit to Scotland – led by the now former Minister for Human Rights, Hooria Mansour – the UK advised on the establishment of a Yemen human rights commission. We also lobbied the government during Yemen's UPR to carry out independent and impartial investigations into the cases of extrajudicial killings in Al-Dhale, as well as passing a law on transitional justice. We continued to urge the government to investigate all extrajudicial killings and the alleged human rights violations of 2011, and to make progress on establishing a Human Rights Commission.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

Yemen is still transitioning from a confession-based prosecution system to one based on evidence. The judiciary remained subject to government interference, and judges continued to face harassment, armed attacks, and kidnappings. Houthi-related armed intimidation prevented the head of the SCER from carrying out his duties for several months, although he was back at work by December. The failure to pass the Law on Transitional Justice further weakened public confidence in the justice system, and corruption remained widespread throughout the public sector.

The UK continued to influence Ministry of Interior reform through the work of the UK Rule of Law and Policing attaché, seconded to the EU. The attaché has worked with the UN to develop training programmes for the Yemeni security and justice sectors on human rights compliance, oversight and the investigations of abuses. The attaché also secured EU funds to strengthen the role of the Ministry of Interior Inspector General, and worked on a project to provide community oversight of policing in Sana'a.

The UK co-hosted a workshop on corruption, which brought together representatives from Yemeni Ministries, public bodies and civil society organisations to discuss ways to support the government tackle corruption. The workshop, and associated Embassy media activities, reached a wide and sympathetic audience.

Death Penalty

The death penalty remained in use for adult offenders for murder and other crimes. 18 adult male prisoners were executed in Sana'a Central Prison, but the total for the rest of the country could have been more. The UK welcomed the fact that no juveniles were executed, but remained concerned that some juvenile detainees continued to be on death row.

We lobbied the government to introduce an immediate moratorium on adult and juvenile executions, with the intention of abolishing the death penalty altogether, during Yemen's UPR in January 2014. We also sponsored the UNHRC Resolution on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights in September, which included references to the Convention Against Torture.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Human Rights Watch published a report alleging Yemeni government complicity in the abuse of migrants by human traffickers; the UK lobbied the government to consider the evidence and launch an investigation. The government later launched raids on some camps, yet the problem still persists, with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reporting that at least 2,440 migrants were kidnapped for ransom in November on arrival at the Red Sea coast. We urge further action and reform to address the issue.

Conditions in detention facilities, including those managed by Yemeni intelligence in Sana'a, Aden and Al-Dale, remained poor. There were allegations of torture of political prisoners detained for their opposition to former President Saleh prior to the 2011 revolution, and reports of prisoners living in a cramped, unhygienic environment, with little access to rehabilitation programmes. Human rights violations appear to be largely due to mismanagement, incompetence, and failure to follow due process, such as pre-trial detention time limits, rather than through active and intentional mistreatment. There were also reports of widespread abuses by the Houthis towards members of the Islah party, which included damage to property, kidnappings and killings.

A British national was detained by the Yemeni authorities and extradited to Ethiopia in an apparent contravention of the Convention Against Torture. The UK immediately raised this case with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who promised to investigate. Initial feedback did not provide sufficient detail and the UK – through Ministerial correspondence and repeated lobbying by the British Ambassador – continued to press the case.

Conflict and Protection of Civilians

Widespread internal conflict had serious implications for the civilian population. Large numbers of civilian deaths were caused by: fighting between the Houthis and supporters and pro-Islah/Salafi armed groups in the north of the country; the Houthi takeover of key government institutions and territory; and the upsurge in assassinations and bomb attacks against civilian, political and security targets by AQAP and other armed groups.

The most prominent AQAP attacks included: the bombing of a Houthi cultural centre in Ibb which killed at least 45 people on 31 December; twin bombings in Radaa which killed 26 people on 16 December, including 16 children travelling on a school bus; the bombing of the residence of the Iranian Ambassador, killing one person and injuring 17 others on 3 December; and a suicide bombing which killed at least 42 people during a Houthi demonstration in Sana'a in October. The UK publicly condemned these attacks, bilaterally and through EU and UN statements.

According to the Sana'a-based Abaad Studies and Research Centre, fighting in Amran, Al-Jawf, Al-Bayda, Sana'a and Marib Governorates resulted in the death over 7,700 people. 80,000 civilians were also displaced and humanitarian conditions deteriorated. DFID's humanitarian programme continued to address issues of protection by providing funding to organisations able to conduct assessments of protection needs

in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and to respond as required. This is through pooled funding accessible to national and international organisations, as well as UN agencies.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

According to the Pew Research Centre, Yemen has "very high" restrictions on religious freedoms. It is still illegal for an individual to convert from Islam – an offence that carries the death penalty – and Muslim women are not permitted to marry non-Muslim men. The Houthi emblem containing the phrase "a curse to the Jews" became common in Houthi-controlled areas in 2014.

An individual from the Baha'i faith was detained without charge by the government, and allegedly subject to physical and verbal abuse and given only limited access to family and legal representation. FCO Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood, wrote to the government urging treatment in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as reiterating the NDC principle of religious freedom. The UK Ambassador also lobbied the Yemeni Foreign Minister.

Women's Rights

Gender inequality remained high, and Yemen was ranked 152 in UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, the lowest any country measured. Child marriage, the suppression of women's political and economic participation, and gender-based violence continued. Only 11% of the technocratic government, formed in November, are female, well below the 30% quota agreed at NDC.

Some progress was made – women held 126 of the 565 seats at the NDC, and four women were appointed to the 17-member CDC. Yemen was one of 138 countries that endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June, and also signed up to the London Girl Summit Charter commitment to end early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

The UK continued to urge the government to fulfil the NDC recommendations on women's rights and to approve the draft Child Rights Law, which includes important provisions on FGM and child marriage. We sponsored the attendance of representatives from civil society to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and supported the attendance of a Yemeni delegation – including the Minister of Human Rights and civil society and diaspora representatives – to the Girl Summit hosted by the Prime Minister, David Cameron, in London.

We also funded a project, led by Saferworld, to help increase the role of women in the security sector in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden, as well as a Human Rights and Democracy Programme project in Hodeidah, led by Progressio, to educate women and men of the socio-economic and health implications of child marriage, and the benefits of women's participation in the public and private sectors.

Children's Rights

The use of child soldiers by the armed forces and non-state actors continued in 2014, despite the government signing an action plan to end the practice. The Houthis used children to staff security checkpoints in Sana'a, which the UK lobbied against, leading to a significant reduction, if not removal, of child soldiers from the checkpoints. We remain concerned that the Houthis are using child soldiers elsewhere and continue to lobby on the issue. We also urged the government to implement the action plan, and urge all groups to put an end to the practice.

Children were killed and maimed as a result of armed conflict; for example, bomb attacks in Radaa killed at least fifteen children travelling on a school bus. According to the Ministry of Education and Teaching, conflicts in Amran, Sana'a and Shabwa damaged or destroyed at least 41 schools, and the armed forces occupied at least six schools in 2014. In November, fighting in Ibb led to the temporary closure of 169 schools, all of which deprived children of their right to education.

Other Issues

Economic and social rights

Yemen remained the poorest country in the Middle East, with much of the 25 million-strong population having limited access to sufficient food, safe drinking water, education, housing and health. The UNDP ranked Yemen 154 out of 187 in its 2014 Human Development Index. An estimated 15.9 million people were in need some form of humanitarian assistance. This includes 10.6 million people who were without access to sufficient food, of whom 5 million were in urgent need of food assistance. 13.4 million had no access to safe water, 12 million no proper sanitation facilities, and 8.4 million no access to basic healthcare.

DFID continued to deliver its £196 million three-year plan on development and reducing poverty, with £70 million committed to the humanitarian response until 2015. The UK was the first humanitarian donor to provide multi-year funding in Yemen, so as to provide more predictable allocations given the changing needs. DFID is also supporting nutrition interventions through the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and delivery of basic services and social protection through the Social Fund for Development.

Refugees

The number of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants remained high. According to the UNHCR, new arrivals mostly from the Horn of Africa, totalled 82,680, a 27% increase from 2013. Refugees and migrants were mainly spread along the west and south-west coasts, and continued to lack access to basic services and food and be vulnerable to human trafficking and smuggling.

DFID are providing over £7 million to the International Organisation of Migration, the Danish Refugee Council and the Norwegian Refugee Council to support the needs of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees from Saudi Arabia who have been forced to leave following labour law

reforms. This support is in the form of provision of food and basic services, as well as livelihood support.

Zimbabwe

The human rights situation in Zimbabwe remained stable throughout 2014, though nonetheless vulnerable. Politically-motivated human rights violations continued, although cases decreased overall. The non-governmental organisation (NGO) Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) recorded fewer than 5,000 cases of politically motivated violations between January and November. This followed a continued downward trend over the past five years from 23,755 cases in 2008 to less than 5,000 in 2013. During 2014, ZPP reported that politically-motivated human rights abuses more commonly took the form of harassment and intimidation, rather than violent assault. The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency recorded progress in the delivery of socio-economic rights, including areas such as maternal mortality, education outcomes and the use of improved drinking water and sanitation facilities. In other areas, there was limited or slow progress – in particular, progress on aligning laws with the new constitution remained slow. Concerns remained around repressive legislation, access to justice, media freedom, and harassment of human right defenders (HRDs).

In April, Freedom House's annual report maintained its "not free" rating of Zimbabwe for civil liberties, political rights and press freedom. The political rights rating improved slightly in the report, due to a decline in harassment and violence against political parties and opposition supporters during the 2013 elections. However, in other areas there was limited progress. The 2014 Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranks Zimbabwe 42 out of 52 African countries for protecting human rights.

The UK government has maintained a policy of supporting Zimbabweans' aspirations for a more democratic, stable and prosperous country. The Embassy in Harare works with NGOs, HRDs, the EU, other diplomatic missions and development agencies to monitor the human rights situation and coordinate development assistance. The UK is still the largest bilateral aid donor to Zimbabwe. We make significant contributions to improve access to socio-economic rights through investments in health, education, water, and sanitation.

We will continue these policies and approaches in 2015.

Elections

Notwithstanding the Zimbabwean government's stated commitment to constitutional alignment, progress was slow. Positive steps remain limited to less sensitive and critical areas, with only four laws passed since the entry into force of the new constitution in August 2013. Aligning legislation with the constitution remained a critical step in reforming Zimbabwe's legal framework. Parliament did not pass a proposed General Alignment Bill, which had been under discussion for some months, and which would align nearly 214 domestic laws with the new constitution. The Electoral Amendment Act, which passed under the new government in July 2014, was supposed to address inadequacies identified by the Southern African Development Community and African Union (AU) 2013 election reports. However, it still contradicted the constitution in some areas. For example, it failed to transfer responsibility

for the electoral roll from the Registrar General's office to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.

We supported the positive judgments by the Constitutional Court to uphold and protect citizens' rights. In July, the court ruled on defamation, invalidating section 31 (a) (iii) of the Criminal Law Codification Reform Act. This law had criminalised the publication of false statements that could undermine public confidence in the uniformed forces, and had been used to prosecute journalists. In June, the government repealed the Statutory Instrument on Postal and Telecommunications Regulations. The court judged the instrument unconstitutional because it allowed third parties to access personal data without a search warrant. As a result of this positive development, the Parliamentary Legal Portfolio Committee withdrew its adverse report to the National Assembly in July. This was a welcome development towards the protection of civil liberties in Zimbabwe.

We welcomed the introduction of the Trafficking in Persons Act, bringing Zimbabwe into line with the Palermo Convention and Protocol. However, implementation will be difficult with the current resources available. We welcomed the Constitutional Court ruling that it is unconstitutional to refuse a Zimbabwean-born person a Zimbabwean passport if they hold another nationality. However, the Registrar General challenged the ruling. The Embassy in Harare will monitor developments.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) was still not fully operational due to limited fiscal support. More work is required to create a complaints mechanism for Zimbabweans to refer cases to the ZHRC. Nonetheless, the ZHRC started work on a national survey on human rights concerns to help establish a baseline and guide for future activities.

In July, the Zimbabwean parliament introduced a Gender Commission Bill that, if passed, would give powers to the new Gender Commission. This is one of the independent commissions established by Chapter 12 of the constitution. Whilst we welcome the bill, we share concerns with local civil society groups that it is not fully aligned with the constitution.

We welcome Zimbabwe's establishment of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), which is also a chapter 12 constitutional commitment. The NPRC will conciliate and mediate disputes among communities, organisations, groups and individuals. The NPRC is also not yet operational.

Despite the intensive political infighting and reshuffle that surrounded the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) party congress in December (in which, reports state, political decisions were made that broke the party's own constitution), levels of politically motivated human rights violations remained relatively low.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

In 2014, political and press freedoms continued to be constrained by a backdrop of harassment, and sometimes violence. We remained concerned by reports of harassment, politically-inspired violence and restrictions on civil liberties. Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) continued to record such incidents, including internal party violence.

Although the constitution aims to protect freedom of speech and press, in practice there were unjustified limits imposed on these freedoms in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, state economic interests, public morality and public health. The Zimbabwean government arrested, detained and harassed critics, and continued to restrict some aspects of media freedom. Printed media was relatively free but the Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity continued to control broadcasting. Although restrictions remained, some signs began to emerge of a more independent radio broadcasting environment. In May, for example, the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe shortlisted 18 applicants for local commercial radio licences. There were also fewer reports of harassment of journalists. Nevertheless, overall, media practitioners and journalists continued to be harassed through attacks by senior politicians, unlawful arrests and threats of closure. On 6 November, police reportedly beat the journalist and human rights activist, Itai Dzamara, as he peacefully demonstrated in Harare. The police reportedly also assaulted Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) lawyer, Kennedy Masiye, as he attempted to represent Dzamara.

We were also concerned by reports of politically-motivated intimidation and arrests by the state, targeting political figures. In November, war veterans' leader Jabulani Sibanda, was arrested following his comments on the political progress of the First Lady, Grace Mugabe. In October, during a period of elective congresses of the two main political parties – ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) – the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) recorded unprecedented levels of hate speech from the media and from senior political figures. Of particular concern were incidents of reported hate speech used by the First Lady. For example, in October, she publicly said she would “spill blood” if anyone attempted to remove her from her Mazoe Farm.

On rights of assembly, we remained concerned by the use of oppressive police tactics. These tactics stopped legitimate peaceful protest and limited freedom of expression. There were cases of public unrest and anti-government protests this year, with the majority peaceful. In July, for example, approximately 150 MDC-T youth members staged anti-government protests in Harare. Further protests took place in August in Harare and Bulawayo. Government forces reacted with restraint, allowing the protests to assemble peacefully. However, there are cases where the police continued to invoke and misuse repressive legislation. They did this to prevent and break up some protests and rallies organised by opposition parties and civil society groups. We received reports of police assaults and arrests of demonstrators in Marondera, Masvingo, Mutare and Harare South.

Access to Justice and the Rule of Law

In 2014, access to justice was limited for victims of political violence, intimidation, and for those trying to seek legal address around land and property rights. In these areas, in particular, there was a culture of impunity. Victims of political violence were rarely able to rely on the police to pursue justice on their behalf. Court cases were lengthy and regularly postponed. Selective application and interpretation by law enforcement officials and the Attorney General limited access

to justice and freedoms by ZANU-PF opponents. Prison conditions, including for those in pre-trial detention, remained poor. There were several high-profile and ongoing court cases during 2014, which highlighted these problems. British Embassy officials from Harare followed all cases throughout 2014 closely, attending many of the political court hearings.

The UK government had previously reported on the ongoing Glenview case, in which 29 MDC-T activists were charged with murdering a police officer in Glenview in May 2011. Their lawyers argued that the state had failed to prove its case and, in September 2013, the state acquitted 21 of the activists. One of those acquitted, Rebecca Mafukeni, died in custody in August 2013. In January 2014, three of the eight remaining activists were released on bail pending trial, which began in March. The trial is ongoing and the Embassy in Harare will monitor the situation and report on any developments.

In a welcome development, the High Court convicted a Kadoma ZANU-PF youth activist, Stabliser Kadafi, for perpetrating political violence. His actions followed the aftermath of the 2008 presidential run-off election. Kadafi was sentenced to 20 years in jail. The UK recognises this as a step towards ending the culture of political violence and impunity in Zimbabwe. We also recognise the ongoing work of HRDs in helping bring cases to the Constitutional Court.

Death Penalty

Zimbabwe still has the death penalty and the new constitution enshrines its use. However, there has been an unofficial moratorium since the last execution in 2004. On 7 June, two convicted armed robbers, Wilson Mavhuto and Charles Rusiko, were given death sentences. Justice Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa announced in August that he would not sign any death warrants for the 97 remaining murder convicts on death row. Since taking up his new role as Vice President, Mnangagwa has expressed his commitment to maintain the de facto moratorium.

Many in civil society called for the government to take the next step and introduce an official moratorium on the death penalty. Zimbabwe continued to vote at the UN General Assembly against the abolition of the death penalty.

Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

The constitution prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. However, security forces continued to engage in such practices with impunity, and with the support of affiliated ZANU-PF officials. In 2012, we welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Justice that the government would ratify the Convention against Torture (CAT). However, this has not yet happened. HRDs continued to raise allegations of torture by police and the security sector during politically motivated interrogations.

Human rights organisations marked the 26 June “UN Day in Support of Victims of Torture” with a “fighting impunity” event in Harare, which Embassy staff attended. Local civil society groups called on the Zimbabwean government to prohibit torture by upholding the constitution. They also asked the government to honour its 2012 commitment under the UN Universal Periodic Review to ratify the CAT.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

In 2014 there was no targeted persecution of organised religious groups. On 30 May, members of the Johannes Masowe eChishanu apostolic church in Harare attacked police officers and a cameraman from the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation. The violence erupted when a rival sect, the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe, visited Masowe eChishanu headquarters with anti-riot police. Journalist bodies and human rights organisations condemned the violence. There has been no formal decision by the state to ban the sect.

Women's Rights

Zimbabwe ranked 110 out of 152 on the 2013 UN Development Programme Gender Inequality Index. The 2013 constitution was stronger on women's rights than its predecessor; it invalidated customary laws and practices that discriminate against women. However, legislation is either not yet aligned to the constitution or is not being implemented. In March, the Supreme Court set an important precedent regarding the Termination of Pregnancy Act, ruling that the state did not fulfil its obligations under the act. This now means that the state is liable to meet the costs of raising a child born as a result of rape.

LGBT Rights

Zimbabwe criminalised homosexuality in domestic legislation in 2006. This left LGBT people marginalised and harassed.

Before and after the 2013 election, members of local LGBT rights group Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) were subjected to state harassment. Police raided their offices and the state alleged that GALZ were running an unregistered organisation and "engaging in gay and lesbian activities". In January, a Harare Magistrate ruled against the state in favour of GALZ after the state had tried to charge them with running an illegal organisation. In May, GALZ and the Dutch Embassy held an event on International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia to discuss the challenges homosexuals face in Zimbabwe. In a welcome development following the event, a ZANU-PF councillor, Richman Rangwani, publicly championed LGBT rights.

However, LGBT people continued to be harassed and intimidated by the state. President Mugabe has repeatedly said that gay rights are not human rights. Mugabe publicly supported the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Act, saying it was "fighting a just fight". In a statement, the President said he was keen to know the members of GALZ and said he would "deal with the organisation". In April, he also publicly warned that Zimbabwe would expel diplomats who promoted gay rights.

Other Issues

Disabled persons' rights

The Zimbabwean government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September 2013. However, there was little progress on implementation. The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare had virtually no budget to address disabled persons' rights.

Economic and social rights

Zimbabwe ranked 156 out of 187 countries on the UN Human Development Index. Despite slightly improved scores since 2008, it is unlikely to meet the Millennium Development Goals, especially access to water, under-five mortality, maternal mortality, and HIV prevalence. The 2011-12 Poverty Income Consumption and Expenditure Survey showed that 72% of the population live below the poverty line of US\$2.56 per day, with the rural population most affected. According to the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, nearly eight in 100 children die before their 5th birthday and for every 100,000 women giving birth, around 600 die as a result. Lack of respect for property rights and the rule of law is a key constraint to growth and development. Commitment to economic and social rights remains uneven, with strong signs of policy-level commitment in some sector ministries and progress on key indicators since 2010 (for example, secondary school enrolment). Nevertheless, concerns exist around the high wage bill crowding out capital expenditure across all social sectors.

Land, farm invasions and forced relocations

We were concerned by the continuing lack of respect for property rights in Zimbabwe and the security of land tenure. There was some positive progress on land reform with the introduction of a land permit system for smallholder farmers. However, farm invasions against black- and white-owned properties continued. In one recent high-profile case, a senior official in the Office of the President and Cabinet took over a commercial farm in Figtree, despite a High Court order barring him from doing so. Even within the last few months of the year, there continued to be allegations of the First Lady "grabbing" land for personal gain. This highlighted the continued lack of respect for the rule of law regarding land and property by those in positions of authority.

Poorly managed forced relocations from urban housing also continued. The Land Bill, designed to create the Land Commission, did not go through parliament. Zimbabwe's constitution is designed to protect citizens from arbitrary eviction or demolition of their houses without a valid court order. However, in January, the government started to demolish housing in the high-density suburb of Chitungweza. This followed reports by a Ministry of Local Government audit team, which identified nearly 25,000 homes for demolition. Residents dispute the legality of this action.

The Chitungweza residents' associations worked with ZLHR to stop the demolitions. A court order in February prevented the demolition of some houses. Despite this ruling, in August and September the government resumed the demolition in Chitungweza, Epworth and Harare. Local Epworth residents reacted angrily to this, with skirmishes breaking out between them and police, who fired live rounds into the air. Skirmishes and assaults were also reported in Chitungweza and Harare.

We remained seriously concerned at the situation at the Chingwizi camp for internally displaced persons. On 31 July, violence erupted at the camp as people grew frustrated at the lack of government assistance and compensation for relocation. On 4 August, ZLHR reported that the police arrested approximately 300 people in the incident. The UN Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs led multilateral action to provide assistance where possible, despite restricted access by local authorities.



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