



House of Commons
Foreign Affairs Committee

**Global Britain: Human
rights and the rule
of law: Government
response to the
Committee's Thirteenth
Report**

**Sixteenth Special Report of Session
2017–19**

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The Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its associated public bodies.

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Publication

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Tom Goldsmith and Hannah Bryce (Clerks), Dr Ariella Huff (Senior Committee Specialist), Ashlee Godwin, Dr Matthew Harries, Emma Makey, Dr Eoin Martin and Hannah Stone (Committee Specialists), Ffion Morgan (Committee Researcher), Clare Genis (Senior Committee Assistant), Zara Emmett (Committee Assistant) and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

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Sixteenth Special Report

On 11 September 2018, the Foreign Affairs Committee published its Thirteenth Report of Session 2017–19, on Global Britain: Human rights and the rule of law (HC 874). The Government response was received on 13 November 2018. The response is appended below.

Appendix

The Government notes the Foreign Affairs Committee’s report on “Global Britain: Human rights and the rule of law”, which was published on 11 September 2018.

This report sets out the Government’s response to each of the Committee’s conclusions and recommendations. The Committee’s text is in bold and the Government’s response is in plain text. Paragraph numbers refer to the Committee’s report.

1. **Even if the UK’s re-election to the Human Rights Council appears to be both far in the future and a safe bet, the recent unexpected failure of the campaign to re-elect a UK judge to the International Court of Justice should serve as a warning against any complacency on this front, and should encourage planning well in advance. *The FCO should make re-election to the Council an explicit goal. In its response to this report, it should set out its strategy for re-election, including an early indication of timelines and resources. This should include an assessment of how far the UK had fulfilled its campaign pledges by the mid-point of its current three-year term. The FCO should also explain how it plans to advance human rights issues at the UN while it is not a member of the Council from 2020. It should set out in detail in which forums it will pursue human rights objectives, what those objectives are, and what resources will be dedicated to this work.*** (Paragraph 7)

Membership of the Human Rights Council (HRC) remains one of the most visible and impactful demonstrations of the UK’s continuing influence in the multilateral system. When the decision on the timing of the UK’s next HRC campaign is taken, the FCO will work closely with other departments and with Parliament to deliver a successful campaign. Following the defeat in the International Court of Justice election, the FCO has reviewed its approach to multilateral elections, taking account of the recommendations made by the Foreign Affairs Committee in its report of 27 February 2018. The FCO will confirm when the UK will next run for re-election to the HRC, as part of our election strategy for the 2020–2025 period. Following the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) election, we will finalise this strategy.

When we are not a sitting member of the HRC we will continue to participate fully and actively; we will continue to make ministerial visits, table resolutions, participate in negotiations, make statements in the general debates and interactive dialogues, and will continue to lobby on UK priorities both in Geneva and throughout the network. Staffing at the Mission in Geneva will not reduce. We will continue to speak at every Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session and put questions and recommendations to every country under review. We will also continue to be an active player on the human rights agenda in New York, including in the General Assembly’s Third Committee.

When seeking re-election to the HRC for the 2017–2019 term, the UK made pledges in five areas. We have lived up to these pledges:

- (1) *Strengthen the role of human rights in the UN's work:* the UK is an active member of the cross-regional caucus on human rights and conflict prevention; we have increased our funding to Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) by £500,000 for this financial year; we provide ongoing support to the Human Rights Up Front initiative, both political and financial; we are a strong advocate for the OHCHR and the High Commissioner; we defend the OHCHR and HRC funding in Fifth Committee; and we are working to ensure UN Security Council decision making is informed by OHCHR and human rights mechanisms, including through briefings.
- (2) *Translate the 2030 Agenda into action that leaves no one behind,* and
- (3) *Work to end violence against women and girls to promote women's participation.* We are proud to be a global leader in promoting gender equality and eradicating violence against women and girls in all its forms, including sexual and gender based violence, including sexual violence in conflict, female genital mutilation, and child, early, forced marriage. The UK is committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 4 on 'education for all' and SDG 5 on 'gender equality' and actively works to mainstream human rights considerations, particularly gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, into implementation of all the SDGs across the United Nations system. This is evidenced through the appointment of the FCO's first ever Special Envoy for Gender Equality in 2017. In April 2018 the FCO launched the Leave No Girl Behind campaign with DFID and DfE working for 12 years of quality education for all girls by 2030. In June 2018 the UK delivered a joint statement on girls' education to the HRC, supported by 152 states and built on this success with a leader-level event during UNGA Ministerial Week. In addition, in November 2019 the UK will host an international meeting on preventing sexual violence in conflict, five years on from the 2014 Global Summit, to assess progress to date and galvanise further international action.
- (4) *Stand up for Freedom of Religion or Belief:* We regularly raise FoRB issues at the HRC and the GA's Third Committee in country specific and thematic dialogues, standing up for the rights of those discriminated against for their faith or beliefs, from the Baha'is detained in Yemen, to Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. We also raise FoRB issues as appropriate in countries' UPRs. We have committed over £1m for projects to promote Freedom of Religion or Belief in Iraq, Malaysia, Burma and Sudan. And we actively support the rights of members of minority faith groups in conflict settings, who are often at much greater risk of persecution. The Prime Minister's appointment of Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon as her Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief underscores the UK's continued commitment to defending FoRB, and will enhance our ability to promote FoRB in countries of concern and respond quickly and effectively to instances of suppression, working with colleagues across Government, both domestically and internationally.

- (5) *Work to promote open societies and challenge threats to civil society:* The UK funds projects through the Magna Carta Fund to strengthen civil society and support human rights defenders through the diplomatic network and at the UN. In 2017 we updated our Guidelines on Working with Human Rights Defenders, which help the diplomatic network to support HRDs. We regularly raise issues of concern with host governments and through international fora, including at the UN's Committee on NGOs. We also work with other countries and through organisations such as the Community of Democracies to highlight such issues. The UK joined the Governing Council of the Community of Democracies in 2016, and its Executive Committee in 2017: the UK is chairing the Executive Committee from 15 September 2018 to 15 March 2019.
2. **UK nationals within the UN system play an important role in human rights diplomacy—both in staff and independent positions. In response to our Report on the 2017 International Court of Justice election, the Government agreed to keep the Committee informed about its campaigns for UN elections. We appreciate the Government's efforts since then to brief the Committee on the International Telecommunication Union election. *We reiterate our call for the FCO to continue informing the Committee of each election campaign—to include a broad description of why the post matters, how it will be campaigning, how it will apply lessons drawn from previous experience, and how the post fits into its wider strategy. It should engage other stakeholders, including those in Parliament, in seeking support. In addition, the Government should update the Committee regularly on its five-year plan about the international elections that it plans to target—in private, if necessary.***(Paragraph 12)

The FCO welcomes the continued interest of the Committee in UN elections and, along with DCMS, appreciates the Committee's engagement on the International Telecommunications Union election. Following the ICJ election, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for the United Nations, initiated a five year forward look of all senior international appointments and elections. This incorporates a cross Whitehall approach as well as engagement with key parliamentary committees where appropriate, for example the Foreign Affairs Committee and International Development Committee, to demonstrate the importance the UK attaches to such elections. The FCO will therefore maintain this positive engagement with the Committee and build on any relevant expertise held by the committees. The FCO will continue to engage with parliamentary committees and other stakeholders as appropriate for future elections, including through updates on the five-year plan for multilateral elections.

3. **We are concerned by the apparent decline in UK representation on the human rights treaty bodies, which could reflect diminished influence within the UN human rights system. While we appreciate that the Government is responding to recent UN election defeats by focusing on a smaller number of campaigns—and while we recognise the importance of the International Telecommunication Union—stepping back from the human rights system is not the answer. The fundamental values on which the system is based are under threat from a sceptical Russia and China, and a disengaged US. The FCO has been clear about the centrality of human rights to global security and economic growth. *The Government should respond to the UN defeats by planning well in advance of***

upcoming campaigns and investing in relationships with a wider range of states at the General Assembly. In its deliberations over which international elections to prioritise, the Government should consider ringfencing elections to human rights positions. The Government should nominate a candidate for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at the next opportunity, in 2020, and should report its commitment to do so in response to this report.(Paragraph 13)

4. ***While respecting the independence of special rapporteurs and working group members, the integrity of the selection process, and the need to support the best-qualified candidate, the Government should give greater support to UK nationals seeking these roles. This should include sharing details of positions with potential candidates, and offering guidance on application processes. In its response to this report, the Government should set out how it will do so.*** (Paragraph 14)

The FCO concurs that advance planning of UK candidates' election campaigns is a critical factor for their success, and is taking steps following the defeat in the ICJ elections to develop a sustainable, longer-term approach to priority multilateral elections. Central to deliberations on this five-year plan is the concept of reinforcing the rules based international system, and human rights bodies form a key strand of this system. The current low levels of UK representation on the human rights treaty monitoring bodies have been identified as an element deserving further consideration when deciding which elections to contest as priorities. As multilateral elections become, for the most part, increasingly contested, the FCO and other government departments leading on specific treaty monitoring bodies will also need to consider the value of nominating candidates for election without priority status.

The UK strongly supports the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and believes that an effective treaty monitoring body is one of the best mechanisms to promote and protect the human rights of women around the world. The UK Government recognises the important role the CEDAW plays in holding States Parties to account in implementing the Convention. A range of factors are considered before making a decision about UK representation across UN Bodies. This means making difficult decisions about which bodies to seek election for. The FCO will, in conjunction with Gender Equalities Office, give further consideration to the nomination of a candidate for the 2020 election when State Party nominations are invited.

In respect of HRC mandated Special Rapporteurs, independent experts, and members of Working Groups, the FCO believes that qualified subject or country experts in the relevant field should be aware of upcoming mandates, and the details of positions are all made publicly available on the OHCHR website. It is important that experts appointed through any selection process are, and are seen to be, independent and be able to perform effectively in the role. The FCO will continue to offer British experts interested in applying information and advice on the appointment process.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon has also strengthened work across the Commonwealth in both New York and at the HRC in Geneva. This includes the introduction of regular briefings to Commonwealth member states on forthcoming business and where appropriate, to seek common cause and action.

5. **The UK's human rights diplomacy at the UN is facing serious challenges. While increased engagement by the Global South is welcome, attacks on the system by China, Russia and others are a cause for grave concern, particularly at a time when the US appears to be stepping back from multilateralism. Resource constraints make the UN human rights system particularly vulnerable to being compromised. Given the UK's diplomatic skills, and status as a P5 member and major donor, it can play an important role in countering the backlash and protecting the international human rights framework. It will need a clear strategy for engaging with the UN—working with those that share its values, and winning over those in the middle ground, to isolate Russia and China—and will need to ensure that its priorities are clearly communicated to its partners. (Paragraph 19)**

6. *In its response to this report, the FCO should set out how it plans to meet the challenges posed by changing political fault lines at the UN. This should include the steps it is taking to work more closely with a broader range of member states, and to address country situations of concern at the General Assembly. It should set out how it plans to co-ordinate its human rights diplomacy with the EU, and how it plans to build a caucus with new partners, such as the Commonwealth. It should also set out how this strategy will be supported by its staffing and resourcing plans for its UN missions over the coming years. The Government should work to ensure the independence and sustainability of the OHCHR. It should assess whether its current level of donations is sufficient, in the light of the challenges facing the system. As a major donor, it should consider supporting the OHCHR's call for a greater share of the UN budget, and consider returning to its previous commitment to indirectly support the Office by assisting with donor initiatives. The UK should also consider how UN independent experts can be better supported and resourced, given that they are currently unpaid yet play such an important function in the UN human rights system. (Paragraph 20)*

The UK works closely with a broad range of Member States on human rights issues across the UN. The UK will represent the 'Western Europe and Others Group' (WEOG) on human rights in 2019. In the HRC we lead a cross-regional group on the Syria resolution, where Russian amendments are regularly defeated; we are a leading member of the core group on the Child Early and Forced Marriage resolution, along with many African countries; and we are in a 'group of friends' on the Latin American led resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity. Likewise, we work closely with the Latin American and Caribbean group in New York on a range of gender resolutions, and with African member states on Child, Early and Forced Marriage. On Burma, we have cosponsored the recent HRC resolutions in conjunction with the European Union and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). We will continue to build on these relationships.

Following the UK's exit from the EU, our objective is to build a deep and special partnership with the EU, protecting our shared interests and values, ensuring that we act together for mutual benefit, defending against evolving threats. This will be true of our cooperation in the UN and other international organisations, where we will remain close partners, and where there will be continuing mutual benefit in consulting and working together on a range of issues. We will continue to mobilise support for these shared values through our alliances and membership of multilateral organisations—not only the UN, but also international financial institutions, the G7, the G20 and NATO.

As Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth, the UK is working with the three pillars of the Commonwealth—its member states, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and people to people networks—to promote a fairer future for all our citizens. Through the UK Mission in Geneva, we are holding regular meetings with Commonwealth member states to share knowledge and understanding on issues relating to the HRC, UPR, and treaty body processes. We have also sought to increase the voice and capacity of the Commonwealth's small states on human rights issues. This includes funding the appointment of two human rights advisers in the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva; and establishing a programme with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to advance equality in the Pacific. We also provide financial support to the Equality and Human Rights Commission as the Chair of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. The FCO is currently looking at staffing needs, including at our multilateral missions to the UN.

We strongly support the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office, advocating for the independence of her mandate, and we defend OHCHR and HRC funding at Fifth Committee. In 2017 the UK was the 8th largest donor to OHCHR, providing £5.5 million in voluntary contributions. We are considering how we might provide additional financial support during this financial year and in the longer term.

The work of independent experts is funded through the OHCHR, and those appointed serve in their personal capacities. They are not UN staff members, but OHCHR provides them with a staff, and funds a number of visits and reports each year. The UK continues to advocate for OHCHR and HRC budgets at the UN Fifth Committee.

7. **The UK's human rights diplomacy will be carried out in a complex and shifting environment in the coming years, and the UN will play a still-greater role in UK foreign policy after Brexit. It is crucial that Parliament and the public have the tools to hold the FCO to account for its human rights work at the UN. The move away from specific human rights objectives to vague aspirations—which at worst amount to little more than warm words and waffle—is a retrograde step. To remove the objectives altogether, at a time when they are more important than ever, is alarming. To a cynical observer it suggests an attempt to dodge accountability for success or failure against measurable objectives. *In its next Human Rights and Democracy report, the FCO should publish detailed and measurable goals for its human rights diplomacy at the UN.* (Paragraph 22)**

The Committee will be aware of the high aspiration the FCO has to take protect and promote human rights globally, and particularly in our human rights priority countries. We consider these our strategic objectives. Setting specific, timed and measurable objectives is not easy in an environment where real, substantive change can take decades rather than months. In some cases, it may be counterproductive to spell out our objectives in public. In addition it is not possible to predict, or set objectives on, unexpected events to which we need to respond. What we believe is required in this environment is a clear destination point coupled with a persistent determination to get there, and the flexibility to respond when events dictate.

Before each HRC session we hold briefings in confidence in London and Geneva for NGO contacts to discuss our objectives for the session and our expectations for individual resolutions, and to harvest points of concern raised by NGOs. The Committee might find

it useful to send an observer, at clerk level, to the meeting in London. The discussions are not publicised, as this would damage our ability to deliver our objectives, but inviting an observer to these discussions might help to meet the Committee’s wish for further transparency.

8. **We welcome the emphasis on a “rules-based” approach in the Government’s human rights priorities—both within the UN and more broadly. This builds on the UK’s strengths, as one of the core supporters and founders of the international rules-based order, and represents a pragmatic approach to promoting human rights worldwide. In the light of this, the lack of detailed reporting on rule of law activities in the FCO’s Human Rights and Democracy reports is unhelpful. *In future reports, the FCO should provide a clear definition of what it means by the rule of law and should distinguish its strands of activity on the rule of law from its work on broader human rights and democracy promotion.*(Paragraph 24)**
9. ***There have been concerns raised about the lack of accessible information on some UK human rights funding programmes, e.g. the CSSF, the Global Britain Fund and the Rules-Based International System Fund, as well as human rights funding through posts, and on the impact of human rights programme funding more generally. The FCO should be clearer about how all such funding is allocated and used and what it achieves, and should inform us in its response to this report how it plans to increase transparency in this respect. The FCO should also clarify how, following Brexit, monies currently provided to EU human rights funding streams will be reallocated to advance the UK’s international human rights work.* (Paragraph 26)**

We agree with the Committee’s summary of the importance of the rule of law to the FCO’s work in general, and specifically in relation to protecting and promoting human rights. The rule of law is a difficult concept to define with consistency. The phrase is often misused by leaders of authoritarian governments, who control both the parliamentary and legal branches to ensure the law as applied supports their personal aims and not those of the people. This is often how such leaders refer to ‘the rule of law’.

For HMG, the rule of law is a thread that runs through all human rights. One cannot be assured of a right without a legal basis for that right, public institutions that work within that legal basis, and there being a reliable way to seek redress. We do not, therefore, believe it would be helpful or indeed informative to try to separate out the rule of law elements of the FCO’s human rights and democracy work. For example, a UK funded programme in Pakistan supports a democratic system in which government institutions are capable; where parliaments are accountable; and in which the State as a whole is responsive to the needs of the public. The rule of law is present in each of these aspects, but is not a stand-alone strand.

The FCO is committed to delivering policy programming—including support for human rights—as transparently as possible for all funding. The FCO applies this principle in its contribution to allocating, shaping, and delivering cross-Whitehall funds, such as the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) which operate in support of National Security Council objectives. Equally, the FCO seeks to be as transparent as possible when it comes to departmental policy programmes.

In both these respects, the FCO works to meet HMG's commitment to improve and increase the information it publishes, based on the guidelines established by the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), with the goal of being assessed as Good or Very Good on aid transparency by 2020.

A summary entitled 'Official Development Assistance (ODA): FCO departmental programme spend objectives' is available on gov.uk (for 2018–19 as well as 2017–18). This covers departmental policy programme work supporting Human Rights, Democracy and the Rules Based International System.

Because of the sensitive nature of work undertaken by FCO departmental policy programmes and the CSSF it is not possible to publish all the details of all programme spending. We do not, for example, publish information that might put our staff or the staff of our implementing partners in danger, or endanger UK national security.

There is only one EU funding stream devoted exclusively to human rights, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, although human rights feature in many aspects of EU programming. At this stage it is not possible to say how we would re-allocate all lines of external expenditure when the UK is no longer a member of the EU. HMG is currently considering all options to recalibrate our external spending, subject to our final agreement with the EU.

10. **Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, UK involvement in these mechanisms will become an even more important tool for the UK's work to promote democracy and the rule of law, strengthening the international rules-based system. (Paragraph 28)**
11. **Promoting the rule of law and democracy globally is key to developing the UK's prosperity. Simply put, it is easier for the UK to trade with countries that adhere to internationally accepted norms on the rule of law with clear and fair judicial processes than with those that do not share these common systems and values. (Paragraph 30)**
12. **The Government will face conflicting priorities between human rights and other Government policies, especially trade deals. This may create short term conflicts, but the prioritisation of human rights is in the UK's long-term commercial, as well as moral, interest. *The Government should commit to including human rights clauses within future trade agreements. In its response, the Government should set out how this commitment could work in practice. It should also explain to us the steps it is taking to promote joined-up working between representatives from other Government departments within posts.* (Paragraph 33)**
13. ***The FCO should outline clear mechanisms for measuring progress in its rule of law and democracy programmes. Whilst the door to negotiation with states must always be kept open, the FCO should respond firmly to countries that fail to make sufficient progress in these areas in order to underline the importance of international standards and rules on human rights. States that fail to make progress, or that regress, should be subject to repercussions, including the suspension of support. For the most extreme cases, such as the ongoing serious and systematic abuse of the Rohingya from Rakhine province by the Burmese government, the FCO should create a measured and graduated set of responses to human rights catastrophes.***

The FCO should review the current situation in Bahrain and Myanmar/Burma and report its findings to us to further consider whether funding should continue to either country. (Paragraph 36)

The UK stands on the brink of a new era in our trading history, where we are in control of how we trade with countries around the world. The UK has a strong history of protecting human rights and promoting our values globally. We will continue to encourage all states to uphold international human rights obligations and work with those determined to reform. We are exploring all possible options in the design of future trade and investment agreements. We will use a range of measures to address human rights concerns, including UN and EU sanctions.

The FCO promotes joined up working in our overseas missions. Wherever appropriate, we combine individual HMG partners' objectives into a single Country Business Plan and work together as a single team in delivering these objectives in-country. The FCO provides a One HMG platform, which offers a single management support function to all HMG partners. We also seek to co-locate HMG's operations overseas, except where good business reasons dictate otherwise.

Clearly, the human rights situation differs from country to country, and the programmes which the FCO pursues will be specifically tailored accordingly. Consequently, we consider changes to circumstances on a case-by-case basis. It should also be borne in mind that the bulk of our human rights and democracy assistance is channelled through non-governmental actors rather than governments. As the responses below to the Committee's questions on Burma and Bahrain show, there are a range of other levers that the FCO has at its disposal to encourage improved human rights performance.

The FCO constantly monitors the human rights situation in Rakhine and the rest of Burma. Burma has been identified as a Human Rights Priority Country (HRPC). The FCO provided a detailed update in the 2017 Human Rights Report (published July 2018) on the human rights situation across the country. The FCO provides regular updates to Parliament on our policy towards Burma, with a particular focus on the Rohingya crisis. We agree with the FAC that the gravity of the situation requires a serious and robust response. The UK plays a leading role in the international effort in responding to the Rohingya crisis, including through the UNSC, HRC and the EU. The UK has taken a graduated approach across multilateral fora. The UK was instrumental in delivering the EU's targeted sanctions on seven individuals from the Burmese military responsible for human rights violations in Rakhine. In September, the Foreign Secretary travelled to Burma to raise the situation in Rakhine directly with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. The Foreign Secretary then convened a meeting of Foreign Ministers in the margins of the UN General Assembly to ensure international attention remained focused on the situation. In Geneva, the UK played a leading role in the joint EU-OIC resolution which was adopted at the September session of the UN Human Rights Council and which established a new accountability mechanism.

Bahrain has also been identified as an HRPC. The UK is committed to providing continuing support to the ambitious Bahraini-led reforms, as we believe that only by working with the Bahrainis can we hope to bring about the important changes to which we and they aspire. We have cooperated closely with the independent oversight bodies and have seen them grow in their work. The Minister for the Middle East most recently welcomed the

conclusion of the investigation by the Special Investigations Unit, their recommendation and the subsequent decision to refer the cases of Mohammed Ramadhan and Hussain Moosa for retrial at the Court of Cassation. We believe this is an encouraging example of thoroughness and independence of the bodies which are unique in the region. The UK has a close relationship with Bahrain which allows us to have open and frank conversations in a constructive manner. Where we have concerns, we do not shy away from raising them at a senior level in private and, where appropriate, we have highlighted our concerns in public through appropriate international fora such as the HRC and the FCO Annual Human Rights Report (AHRR).

The UK does not directly fund any institutions within Burma or Bahrain. In Burma, the UK provides some funding to civil society organisations, as well as local and international NGOs. In Bahrain, UK Technical Assistance supports Bahraini led reform programmes to support building effective and accountable public and judicial institutions. Only by working with Bahrain can we hope to achieve the changes we would like to see. All of our work is in line with international standards and aims to share UK expertise and experience. Any training provided by, or on behalf of, the British Government fully complies with our domestic and international human rights obligations. The Government applies its Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) guidance to any assistance provided overseas. The OSJA guidance is a framework to assess and manage any human rights risks associated with UK assistance. OSJA assessments completed for specific projects or cases are regularly reviewed and updated in line with developments in the country concerned. This informs how the assistance is pursued.

14. **Although we agree that the FCO must necessarily be selective in its choice of priority countries, and in the information provided under each entry, we are disappointed by the omission of Turkey, given the sustained and worrying deterioration in the human rights situation. We recommend that the FCO designates Turkey as a priority country in its next report. We also recommend, to improve the consistency of the information provided for each of the priority countries, that some key human rights indicators, including the use of the death penalty, treatment of minority groups and the LGBT community, respect for freedom of religion or belief, women's rights and the situation of human rights defenders, are addressed under every entry. (Paragraph 38)**

While Turkey is not currently an HRPC, the UK is and has been consistently active and vocal in promoting human rights in Turkey on diplomatic channels including at the very highest level, and through a broad programme of support to civil society. For example, on 15 October the Foreign Secretary met Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu and emphasised the importance of Turkey meeting its international human rights obligations. Using the Guidance on OSJA, the FCO regularly updates its assessment of human rights risks in Turkey. This informs the management of those risks encountered by UK Government organisations when delivering security and justice assistance in Turkey. UK influence and strength of relationship with Turkey has also yielded positive results on issues relating to the release of human rights defenders.

HRPCs are selected on the basis of criteria, which is publically available. HRPCs usually remain for the duration of a Parliament. In addition to the HRPCs, a number of other countries, including Turkey, are referred to in the 2016 and 2017 AHRRs. For example, both reports highlight issues with freedom of expression in Turkey, and the 2017 report

also references Turkey in relation to Human Rights Defenders, the Open Government Partnership and the Council of Europe. We will continue to have the option to refer to non-HRPCs, including Turkey, in future AHRRs.

When drafting entries relating to HRPCs for the AHRR, we try to address the full range of human rights issues including but not limited to those cited by the Committee: *the use of the death penalty, treatment of minority groups and the LGBT community, respect for freedom of religion or belief, women's rights and the situation for human rights defenders*. We should, however, recognise that not all of the issues cited will be matters of concerns in all HRPCs.