



House of Commons
Foreign Affairs Committee

The UK's relations with Turkey: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2016–17

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

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 12 September 2017*

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.

Current membership

[Tom Tugendhat MP](#) (*Conservative, Tonbridge and Malling*) (Chair)

[Ian Austin MP](#) (*Labour, Dudley North*)

[Chris Bryant MP](#) (*Labour, Rhondda*)

[Ann Clwyd MP](#) (*Labour, Cynon Valley*)

[Mike Gapes MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Ilford South*)

[Stephen Gethins MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, North East Fife*)

[Ms Nusrat Ghani MP](#) (*Conservative, Wealden*)

[Ian Murray MP](#) (*Labour, Edinburgh South*)

[Andrew Rosindell MP](#) (*Conservative, Romford*)

[Royston Smith MP](#) (*Conservative, Southampton, Itchen*)

[Nadhim Zahawi MP](#) (*Conservative, Stratford-on-Avon*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/facom and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Chris Stanton (Clerk), Zoe Oliver-Watts (Second Clerk), Dr Ariella Huff (Senior Committee Specialist), Ashlee Godwin, Dr Eoin Martin and Nicholas Wade (Committee Specialists), Clare Genis (Senior Committee Assistant), James Hockaday and Su Panchanathan (Committee Assistants), and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6105; the Committee's email address is fac@parliament.uk.

Second Special Report

The Foreign Affairs Committee published its Tenth Report of Session 2016-17, on [The UK's relations with Turkey](#), on 25 March 2017, as House of Commons paper HC 615. The response from the Government was received on 20 July 2017 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

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.

An "understanding" relationship, during a crucial period for Turkey and the UK

1. ***The relationship that the FCO establishes with Turkey must not just be with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, or with the Justice and Development Party alone. Indeed, it must not just be with the state apparatus, or with whichever party or person currently controls it. The UK should seek a deeper and therefore more durable connection. The UK should support programmes that seek engagement with the Turkish people, whichever background they hold, while working to uphold the values of human rights and democracy that benefit them all.*** (Paragraph 19)

Building strong and durable relationships across Turkish political parties and society is vital for the UK-Turkey relationship. As well as developing links with the ruling AK Party, Ministers and Embassy officials regularly engage with parties across the political spectrum as well as civil society. With our extensive Turkey network (209 FCO staff), and regular travel across the country, we are able to get under the skin of the country in a way which allows the UK to understand the diversity and complexity of the country.

The British Embassy in Ankara provides project support to a wide-range of Turkish civil society organisations active in the areas of fundamental freedoms, minority rights and conflict resolution. This year we are funding nine such organisations to conduct projects on issues from LGBTI and women's rights, to refugee access to services and protection, to training lawyers on international human rights standards.

British diplomats engage in regular dialogue with civil society and regularly attend trials, including those of journalists, together with other EU Member States.

2. ***A central challenge that Turkey will face is the need to strengthen its public and state institutions. These have been weakened as a result of the acrimony in the country's politics over the past decade, and were further weakened by the coup attempt and the government's response. When facing its future challenges, Turkey will need an effective military, independent economic and judicial institutions, as well as a free and vibrant media, among other institutions. The UK should assist Turkey in developing both the capacity and independence of these institutions.*** (Paragraph 30)

Independent institutions are vital for sustaining a strong, healthy Turkish democracy. The rule of law and fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, underpin this. In

their private dialogue with the Turkish authorities, Ministers and senior officials regularly emphasise the importance of progress in this area in Turkey as well as raising concerns over individual cases.

The Embassy undertakes a wide range of project work that contributes to the strength of Turkish institutions. These have included close work with the Justice Ministry on introducing robust alternative dispute resolution mechanisms into the Turkish justice system and coaching for senior officials on effective and inclusive civil service leadership, as well as supporting civil society networks aimed at holding the Turkish government and parliament to account. Chevening, the UK government's Scholarship Programme, has also been running in Turkey since 1988 and is a long term investment by the UK in developing stronger ties between our countries. Our Alumni in Turkey is the largest in Europe with over 1800 Alumni.

In the area of press freedom, we have supported training for journalists, fact-checking resources, and monitoring of the situation of the media. We work collaboratively with the Turkish government, civil society and business through British Council programmes to strengthen institutional capability in higher education, science research and the creative industries, with particular focus on increasing the employability of young people, generating bilateral science research partnerships for mutual benefit, increasing cultural and educational opportunities for women, girls and under-represented groups, and supporting the growth of a vibrant creative sector.

We continue to foster strong military links between the UK and Turkey, including through regular inward and outward visits, annual High Level Military Dialogues and Army, Air and Navy staff talks. As part of our routine dialogue with the Turkish Military and Ministry of National Defence we share best practice for modernisation and defence reform. We also run a programme of major combined training events with the Turks involving naval, land and air forces. We are working collaboratively with the Turkish Armed Forces on capability, most notably in support of the recently signed TF-X project and in the area of counter-Improvised Explosive Devices.

In terms of economic institutions, we have used Prosperity Fund projects to support improvements in the business environment in Turkey, to the benefit of the Turkish economy and UK investors. Our particular focus has been on transparency, regulatory issues and anti-corruption policies. We have supported the development of Turkey's asset management, pension fund and Islamic finance industries. Through our Newton Fund, we have promoted joint projects between British and Turkish scientists and researchers.

A "strategic" relationship, and its implications for Turkey and the UK

3. We are concerned that the loss of influence of the UK's international allies in Turkey might have a detrimental effect on the possible leverage that the UK might have on Turkey as well. *The FCO should use its close relations with the Turkish establishment to mediate as required between Turkey and the US and EU states.* (Paragraph 32)

The FCO does not shy away from using our strong relationship with Turkey to ensure that the UK, Turkey, US and EU work together to tackle shared challenges including migration

and regional conflicts including Syria. We also continue to be clear with both the EU and Turkey on the strategic importance of a constructive EU-Turkey relationship, and actively support strengthening the partnership.

4. A totally free trade agreement with Turkey may not be possible due to the current relationship that Turkey has with the EU and the EU Customs Union. *Given Turkey's Customs Union with the EU, the FCO should clarify what trade arrangements it is currently able to negotiate with Turkey, when and how that might change, and when they will be implemented. The FCO should work with the Department for International Trade in exploring and delivering new trade and investment opportunities with Turkey, now and following Brexit, and in negotiating revised trading arrangements with Turkey once the UK leaves the EU.* (Paragraph 38)

Turkey is an important trade and investment partner for the UK. The value of UK goods exports to Turkey in 2016 was \$6.2bn and the value of Turkish good imports goods into the UK in 2016 was \$12.2bn, making the UK one of Turkey's main trading partners. The Foreign Office and the Department for International Trade work closely together in London and across the Turkey network to identify and develop opportunities for British businesses in Turkey and vice versa.

The Department for International Trade has teams in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir which work to support and promote British trade and investment, including through our five High Value Campaigns (major infrastructure projects). Our staff work closely with UK businesses to lobby on their behalf, support market access and tackle key barriers to trade, including through the Joint Economic Trade Committee meeting—hosted at Ministerial level and next due to take place in October 2017 in the UK. The Department for International Trade in Turkey also has a strategic relationship with the British Chamber of Commerce in Turkey for the delivery of services to UK small and medium-sized businesses and enterprises in order to assist them trading with and exporting to Turkey. In 2016/17, our Inward Investment team secured 28 projects (against a target of 20) from Turkey, resulting in a total investment value of £52.3 million and 393 new jobs in the UK. In 2016/17, HMG also dedicated £1 million through the Prosperity Fund to improve the business environment in Turkey, with dividends for UK companies seeking to export and invest.

To ensure this strong trading relationship continues to flourish as the UK leaves the EU, we have established an official level trade working group. While the post-Brexit UK-Turkey relationship is still to be defined, it will—due to Turkey's place in the EU Customs Union—be closely linked to our future trading relationship with the European Union. The FCO, DIT and DExEU are therefore working closely together to ensure a smooth transition.

5. *The complexity of modern Turkey, and the nature of its internal divisions, means that the process of constructing this relationship must be managed by the FCO with adequate capability and subtlety. We were impressed by the leadership and effectiveness of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Turkey Richard Moore, and by the knowledge of his staff. The FCO is running a large operation in Turkey, and it is important that the FCO is given the resources to sustain this operation and manage the complex and important relationship with Turkey going forward.* (Paragraph 41)

The FCO is clear, including as set out in the 2016–17 Annual Report, that our overseas network is our core asset and that our ambition is to be the best in class diplomatic service in the world. To do that, the FCO is investing in its people and committed to be more expert and more agile, with an efficient world-class platform that enables the FCO to operate effectively at home and abroad to deliver our objectives.

Within the network in Turkey, HMG has over 300 staff including more than 200 FCO staff. To support the delivery of our objectives in Turkey we also invest through cross-Whitehall and FCO programme work. For example, in 2016–17 we are spending £1m on Prosperity Fund programmes promoting transparency, the low carbon economy, science and innovation and financial services in Turkey; channelling £4.5m of the CSSF Migration and Returns Fund to migration projects with the Turkish Government to enhance their capacity to tackle illegal migration; and £1.6m from the FCO's Bilateral Programme Fund and Magna Carta Fund to supporting rule of law, good governance and human rights. We are also spending £6m on a multi-year Newton Katip Celebi Fund, a science and innovation programme bringing together UK and Turkish scientists. The British Council is investing in improving the teaching learning of English in Turkey; promoting greater social inclusion in partnership with the Ministry of Education and promoting bilateral research partnerships.

6. We welcome the agreements reached over the 'TF-X' combat aircraft development programme, as a key component and symbol of the strategic co-operation between the UK and Turkey. This programme should last for decades; it needs to reflect the long-term interests of both countries and survive the inevitable short-term ups and downs in their bilateral relationship. *The strategic partnership implied by this deal should be reinforced by the Government making clear what restrictions there are on the use or transfer by Turkey or the UK of sensitive technology and intellectual property contained within the programme, both during the aircraft's construction and after its completion.* (Paragraph 47)

The TF-X agreement is underpinned by an Exchange of Letters between the Turkish and UK government. These set out the application of the UK's export licensing arrangement (in the form of a specific Open General Export Licence), which takes into account international humanitarian considerations. The parameters for the use and protection of classified HMG data and related Intellectual Property Rights, including the restrictions the UK requires on the use or transfer of this data by Turkey both during the aircraft's construction and after its completion, are also covered by this agreement.

7. *The Government should also clarify what safeguards are in place to ensure that the aircraft will be used in compliance with international humanitarian law. The UK is subject to safeguards in this respect, and we expect the FCO to explain how these safeguards will apply to TF-X.* (Paragraph 48)

Turkey is a longstanding NATO ally and our countries have developed a strong partnership. This includes growing commercial, trade and security links.

HMG takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We rigorously examine every application on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing

Criteria (known as the 'Consolidated Criteria'). All relevant information is taken into account at the time of the assessment, including reports from NGOs and our overseas network

The Consolidated Criteria provide a thorough risk assessment framework – they require us to think hard about the impact of providing equipment and its capabilities. These are not decisions we take lightly.

We continue to review all licences against the Consolidated Criteria on a case-by-case basis, in light of prevailing conditions. We will not issue a licence if we judge there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression, or if a proposed export fails to meet one or more of the Consolidated Criteria.

8. *The UK, as a strategic partner of Turkey, and within the framework of both NATO and the Global Coalition against ISIL, must continue to engage Turkey fully in the fight against ISIL as a shared priority and ensure that Turkey is not distracted from focusing on this military objective, in light of concerns set out in Chapter 5.* (Paragraph 50)

The UK and Turkey are partners in combating Daesh. Through Operation Euphrates Shield and its domestic counter-terrorism efforts Turkey has contributed significantly to this common endeavour. It has done so at the same time as addressing the considerable threat posed by the PKK.

The UK frequently discusses the situation in Syria, Iraq and the wider region with Turkish officials and the Turkish military, including our shared aims of eradicating Daesh, reducing violence and supporting political progress.

UK-Turkey co-operation has significantly reduced the numbers of UK-linked extremists reaching Iraq and Syria through Turkey, based on information sharing and ongoing Turkish action to identify and disrupt travellers. UK officials, police, security services, aviation and tourist industries work closely with their Turkish counterparts to mitigate the risk of terrorist attacks.

9. *To support Turkey though the refugee challenge, and the costs to Turkey that it entails, the UK should press the EU swiftly to give Turkey the funds for this purpose that have been promised but not yet delivered. While the terms of the agreement between Turkey and the EU are not being fully met by either side, it is the non-delivery of promised EU resources to relieve the actual suffering of refugees which is reinforcing an anti-EU narrative from the Turkish government.* (Paragraph 57)

The UK is working closely with Turkey to address the consequences of the Syria conflict, including the resulting refugee crisis. In 2016, the UK committed €328 million to the €3 billion EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT)—in addition to the UK's contribution towards €1 billion of EU funding—to provide support for refugees in Turkey.

The FRIT helps to build schools, provides health services and social welfare payments for the most vulnerable refugees, and provides vital municipal infrastructure such as waste management and water treatment facilities to alleviate pressure on Turkish communities hosting refugees.

As of May 2017, the EU had allocated €2.9bn of the €3bn to projects, of which €1.6bn has been contracted and €811m disbursed. The UK is working closely with the EU to ensure that the remaining funds are disbursed as quickly as possible.

As of May 2017, 600,000 people have received support from the Emergency Social Safety Net (this enables refugees to meet their daily needs easily); 500,000 Syrian children have been enrolled in the education system; over 517,000 healthcare consultations have taken place and over 2,000 teachers and educational personnel have been trained.

10. *We support the expanding of trade and defence ties between the UK and Turkey, not only because of their security and prosperity implications but also because of the strong voice that these ties should give the UK in Ankara. It is a voice that we expect the UK to use, not least so that its human rights concerns are heard.* (Paragraph 70)

Our expanding trade and defence relationship strengthens the breadth and depth of the UK-Turkey bilateral relationship, providing a platform for frank discussions across the board, including where there are human rights concerns. We will continue to nurture a relationship based on trust and respect to underpin our constructive dialogue.

11. *The UK should therefore seek to both defend human rights and secure trade. These two concerns have complementary—not contradictory—interests. The protection of human rights in Turkey, and the success of UK trade there, both require the rule of law and an impartial judiciary, an end to the purges that have followed the coup attempt, an end to internal conflict and terrorism, and a UK Government that is listened to in Ankara.* (Paragraph 71)

Human rights, the rule of law and internal security are important factors in trade and economic success. They are also critical enablers of a healthy democracy, and vital in their own right. We have long encouraged the importance of a stable, functioning democracy and legal system that enables business to flourish.

12. *The FCO seems willing to accept the Turkish government's account of the coup attempt and the Gülenists broadly at face value. While some of the individuals involved in the coup may have been Gülenists, given the large number of Gülenist supporters and organisations in Turkey, it does not necessarily follow that the Gülenists were responsible for the coup or that their leadership directed the coup. However, the FCO seems unable to cite much evidence to prove that it is true. Despite its claim to possess an almost unique understanding of the threat that Turkey faces, the FCO strikes us as knowing too little for itself about either the Gülenists or their role in the coup attempt. The Government's support for the Turkish government in the wake of the coup attempt would have been more convincing had it been able to present an independent analysis to support its position. We recommend again that the Government ensures that sufficient funding is available to the FCO, to repair the hollowed-out state of the FCO's analytical and research capabilities.* (Paragraph 105).

As the Committee notes, there is a pervading lack of transparency within the Gulen movement. We continue to engage with the Turkish government and others, including researchers and academics as well as law enforcement professionals, to understand more about the movement.

The trials of those alleged to have organised the coup attempt of 15 July 2016 are still ongoing and producing new evidence which will inform our evolving analysis of that traumatic event, its origins and the aftermath.

In terms of the FCO's overall analytical and research capabilities, Diplomacy 20:20—the FCO's transformational change programme—is focussed on delivering a more expert and agile organisation. The programme formally launched on 1 December 2016 and will run until at least 2020. On expertise, the FCO has set out priority skills for FCO staff in a new Skills Statement and allows greater recognition of skills and knowledge. We have introduced longer tours for FCO staff in the UK, and for many overseas, to reduce churn and enhance our policy making, operational delivery and institutional memory. The Diplomatic Academy has continued to roll out its faculties, with a major focus on building trade policy expertise.

The Turkish government's response to the threat from the coup attempt

13. *The FCO should press Turkey to ensure that:*

- a) *the provisions of Turkey's State of Emergency, and the actions taken under them, are proportionate to the exigencies of the circumstances that triggered the Emergency's declaration, and that these exigencies are given as narrow a definition as possible*
- b) *the State of Emergency is temporary, not prolonged, and is lifted as soon as possible*
- c) *that Turkey complies fully with its ECHR obligations.* (Paragraph 113)

and

14. *We were encouraged by the nascent language of restraint and reconciliation that we heard at the highest political level when we visited Turkey. The FCO must work to see that this trajectory is pursued in practice, by pressing the Turkish government to ensure that:*

- a) *all of those detained or dismissed can access a substantive means of appeal, and that this means of appeal is both fair and prompt. We are concerned that the existing means are too often inaccessible, and too slow in hearing the large number of cases.*
- b) *that these individuals must have access to the evidence against them and to their lawyers.*
- c) *that the structures established to determine their innocence or guilt are sufficiently independent of the executive. There currently remains a risk that they are appointed to a large extent by the institutions whose use of powers they are intended scrutinise.*
- d) *that those who have not yet been reinstated know the avenues of appeal and redress.* (Paragraph 128)

The Turkish government has a right and responsibility to act against the suspected perpetrators of the coup attempt and also against those who have committed or are planning terrorist acts.

At the same time, it is important that measures under the State of Emergency be proportionate, justified and in line with democratic principles and Turkey's international human rights obligations.

We have made clear the importance of undertaking legal processes fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Minister for Europe and the Americas have raised the importance of Turkey upholding its international obligations directly with their counterparts since the attempted-coup last year.

We welcome Turkey's steps to address Council of Europe concerns by reducing the custody period and creating a mechanism for review of dismissals under the State of Emergency. The European Court of Human Rights has noted that this newly-created mechanism should be given the opportunity to demonstrate it can provide a credible remedy. The UK supports the dialogue between Turkey and the Council of Europe on implementation of the Emergency Decrees, including engagement with the Venice Commission.

We will continue to engage with the Turkish Government at all levels on these issues, and to monitor the situation closely.

15. *The FCO needs to clarify whether it supports the extent of the purges as being justified by the scale of the threat that Turkey is facing.* (Paragraph 127)

We recognise the difficulty of tackling the networks of secretive organisations, and of tackling terrorism. We equally attach importance to safeguards which help uphold international human rights standards and the rule of law. We have encouraged the Turkish Government to work with the Council of Europe in support of processes compatible with international standards. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Minister for Europe and the Americas have discussed with the Turkish government the importance of upholding the rule of law.

The Turkish government's response to the threat from the PKK

16. *The FCO must both support Turkey in its fight against the terrorist threat from the PKK and encourage both sides to re-engage with the peace process. The ceasefire between the PKK and the state between 2013 and 2015 allowed an unprecedented de-facto improvement in Kurdish rights, but the FCO must press the Turkish government to enshrine them into law.* (Paragraph 136)

The PKK is a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK and we take action to disrupt its networks in UK and more widely—including through arrests.

We have consistently encouraged the Turkish government to take further steps, including considering legal and policy measures, to sustainably resolve the Kurdish issue and protect minority rights. For a peace process to resume, PKK violence must end.

17. *The FCO should explain how it is working with the Turkish government to secure a path towards both a ceasefire with the PKK, and a wider process of reconciliation to address the causes of the conflict. Turkey may be able to benefit from the FCO sharing the example of the UK's experience in Northern Ireland.* (Paragraph 137)

As well as encouraging steps towards resolving the Kurdish issue in our contacts with the Turkish government and other political figures, we have in recent years supported “Track II” projects bringing together different groups in support of reconciliation.

We have supported several visits to Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK by Turkish political actors, and supported wider lessons sharing involving figures connected with the Northern Irish peace process in particular. We have also supported think-tanks working on analysing these issues and promoting conflict resolution.

18. *While the conflict in Turkey's southeast continues, we recommend that the FCO presses the Turkish government to ensure:*

- a) *that the operations undertaken by the Turkish security forces to counter PKK terrorism are legal, necessary and proportionate. There is significant evidence to indicate that they are not. In particular, the FCO should press for the use of open-ended and wide-reaching curfews to be ended, and damage to civilian infrastructure to be both minimised as a matter of policy and repaired as a matter of urgency.*
- b) *that allegations of the killing of civilians and the use of torture by the Turkish security forces, and allegations of a culture of impunity within these forces, are properly investigated.*
- c) *that independent observers are given access to the conflict-affected areas.* (Paragraph 146)

PKK terrorist attacks, and the PKK's decision to take fighting to the towns and cities of the south-east of Turkey in 2016, show callous disregard for human life and wellbeing. Turkey has a legitimate right to defend itself against this appalling violence.

At the same time, the Foreign Secretary and Her Majesty's Ambassador to Turkey have emphasised to the Turkish government the importance of responding with proportionality, respect for human rights and avoidance of civilian suffering.

We have supported the UN in urging investigation of allegations against the Turkish security forces and its request for access to affected areas. We welcomed the visits in 2016 of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment visited Turkey in 2017.

19. *Turkey's policies in northern Syria pose important questions for the UK, and the FCO should:*

- a) *Explain whether the UK supports the creation of a safe-zone by Turkish forces and their allies in northern Syria, and provide an assessment of the*

implications that the creation of such a zone carries for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and any peace process, as well as for the safety and security of those within such a zone.

The UK supports all genuine efforts to reduce the level of violence in Syria, protect civilians and create the right conditions for a successful political process.

The practicalities and implications of any form of safe zone would need to be considered very carefully and in close consultation with partners.

We are clear that safe zones should not contribute to the break-up of Syria, nor should they lead to the involuntary return of refugees.

- b) ***Explain whether the UK supports the settlement of Syrian refugees within territory controlled by Turkish-backed Syrian opposition groups in Syria.***

The UK greatly values the efforts and generosity of Turkey in hosting nearly 3 million Syrian refugees, and we welcome Turkey's extraordinary efforts in guaranteeing their protection.

The UK supports the return of refugees to their country of origin only when the conditions allow and on a voluntary, dignified and safe basis, in accordance with applicable norms of international law and the principle of non-refoulement.

- c) ***Explain whether it shares our assessment that the YPG, rather than ISIL, are now the primary target of Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield.***

Since the Committee's report, Operation Euphrates Shield has been formally ended by the Turkish government. The situation in Northern Syria remains complex and we continue to cooperate with Turkey in the fight against Daesh.

- d) ***Explain whether it agrees with Turkey's assertion that the YPG are linked with the PKK to such an extent that they should share the latter's designation as terrorists. This is of immediate importance, given that the YPG are the predominant Kurdish group in northern Syria, have significantly expanded their territory there, and are the main component of the SDF coalition which both the UK and US support against ISIL.*** (Paragraph 156)

The YPG is not a proscribed terrorist group in the UK. At the same time, we are concerned that the YPG and PYD (the political wing of the YPG) still maintain links with the PKK, who are a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK. We take these reports seriously, and raise them in all interactions with the PYD. We urge the YPG and PYD to distance themselves from the PKK and its terrorist activity.

20. Conflict between the YPG and Turkey is not in the interest of the UK or the wider international community, and the FCO must explain how it is going to work to end the fighting between two forces that have been the primary armies fighting ISIL on the ground in Syria. (Paragraph 157)

We recognise the important contribution that Turkey has made in Northern Syria by pushing back Daesh forces from the Turkish border through Operation Euphrates Shield. We also note the role the YPG has played in countering Daesh. The situation in Northern

Syria remains highly complex: the Global Coalition against Daesh is working with several partner forces in the fight against Daesh. The UK is maintaining close engagement and coordination with Turkey as a NATO Ally and member of the Coalition, both in fighting Daesh and seeking to find long term stability for Syria through the Geneva political process.

21. *We recommend a determined effort by the FCO to persuade Turkey to recommence the peace process with the PKK. This should include support for Turkish recognition and enablement of Kurdish cultural identity, and discussion of sustainable local autonomy as the basis for the wider reconciliation of Turkish, Kurdish, and international interests.* (Paragraph 158)

We will continue to encourage efforts to sustainably resolve the Kurdish issue – something our Embassy in Ankara frequently discusses with political interlocutors, and which we have used our project funds to support (see 17 above). But it is not for us to prescribe how to achieve success. For a peace process to resume, PKK violence must end.

The status of democracy in Turkey

22. *The FCO should press Turkey to adopt a narrow and focused definition of “terrorism”, and to ensure that it—or other procedural methods—are not applied in the politically-motivated sense of silencing the government’s critics.* (Paragraph 176)

In defining “terrorism” we have urged Turkey to consider the importance of the rule of law, international human rights standards, the independence of the judiciary and freedom of speech. We will continue to discuss this with Turkey bilaterally, and encourage their engagement with, for example, the Council of Europe on these issues.

23. *The UK has distinguished itself as a friend in the eyes of the Turkish government, and both sides are seeking to cement a strategic relationship. But, as the UK does so, it must not be seen as disregarding—or even excusing—allegations of serious human rights violations and the erosion of democracy in Turkey. It is vital that the UK’s criticism both privately and publicly is not withheld when grounds for criticism exist.* (Paragraph 64)

and

24. *When defending human rights, the UK must be both seen and heard. Discretion is sometimes necessary for impact, and private behind-the-scenes meetings will also play an important role in the UK’s influence on human rights in Turkey, but the FCO must be prepared to raise its concerns about Turkey with the Turks publicly. Currently, by giving human rights insufficient prominence in its dialogue with Turkey, the UK risks being perceived as de-prioritising its human rights values. If that impression is sustained, then it would damage the UK’s international reputation and not serve the protection of human rights in Turkey.* (Paragraph 178)

The UK’s strong relationship with Turkey is vital for the UK’s global security and prosperity objectives. In support of that strong relationship and our shared objectives, we are able to have frank discussions with Turkey on issues such as human rights and the rule of law.

The Prime Minister raised these issues with President Erdogan during her trip to Turkey in January and during their meeting at the G20 in July this year. The Foreign Secretary and the Minister for Europe and the Americas also regularly underline the importance of these issues during their visits and meetings with the Turkish government. In addition, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Turkey and others raise concerns with senior officials where necessary, and will continue to do so.

We are also prepared to, and do, make our concerns known publically, including as a member of the Council of Europe, OSCE and the European Union where appropriate.

25. *We recommend that the FCO designate Turkey as a Human Rights Priority Country in its next Human Rights and Democracy Report.* (Paragraph 179)

The decision on whether a country is included in the Annual Human Rights Report as a Priority Country is based on the human rights situation in the country, assessed against objective international criteria; the trajectory of change; and the extent of the UK's work on human rights in that country.

In 2016, the FCO designated 30 Human Rights Priority Countries. The latest FCO Human Rights and Democracy Report, issued on 20 July 2017, focuses on those countries. A number of other countries, including Turkey, are referenced across the thematic sections, including freedom of expression, death penalty, the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe and others. We will continue to monitor the human rights situation in Turkey.