

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Positions for the Security Council

I. Transnational Terrorism

On behalf of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the UNSC President released S/PRST/2010/19, including the following statement: “[t]he Security Council condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, reaffirms that any terrorist acts are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, whenever and by whomsoever committed, and reaffirms that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality or ethnic group.” This statement addresses the concern that the nature of terrorist attacks have continued to evolve. Almost six years later, that powerful statement could not be more correct. The incidences of transnational terrorism have increased and the issue is at the forefront of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland’s (UK) concerns. Multiple terrorist organizations have seized onto a new trend by recruiting foreign fighters and enabling violent extremists, a.k.a ‘Lone Wolf’ style attacks, to promote their cause. These two types of terrorists can be anyone, regardless of any aforementioned factors, and are making transnational terrorism an increasingly scary reality across national borders.

In 2014 alone, Daesh in Syria and Iraq convinced foreign fighters and violent extremists to conduct two dozen attacks in other countries. By 2015 that number had increased to almost sixty attacks performed by foreign fighters and violent extremists worldwide. Meanwhile, over two hundred attacks were performed directly by Daesh themselves. This issue is not limited to Daesh, though. Al Qaeda continues to promote extreme violence and recruit foreign fighters, and Al Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria are still actively partaking in terrorist activities. According to the British intelligence agency MI5, British Islamist extremists continue to travel to South Asia and the Arabian Peninsula to acquire terrorist training.

Independent organizations believe that as many as 11,000 foreign fighters have travelled to Syria from the Middle East alone, and it is estimated several thousand more have arrived from Europe, Asia, and Australia. Every country, including the UK, potentially harbors violent extremists and has citizens that have been recruited as foreign fighters. The United Kingdom believes that about 800 of its citizens, including women and children, have gone to Syria and Iraq as possible foreign fighters and are of continued interest to the security and intelligence agencies monitoring terrorism, including the Security Service MI5 (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service MI6 (MI6), and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). Violent extremists have also been an issue within the borders of the UK, including Brusthom Ziamani in 2014, who attempted to behead a British soldier, and Roshonara Choudhry in 2010, who was convicted of attempted murder.

Terrorism threats are constantly mutating, presenting major challenges for global intelligence services. Since 2010, the United Kingdom has strengthened its counter-terrorism budget, committed to protect its citizens and the international community alike by continually updating standards and allocating resources appropriately. In 2013, standards were updated that allowed the government to cancel the passports of individuals planning to travel for terrorist-related activities and in 2014, 24 passports were seized under these new standards. The domestic Counter-Terrorism and Security Act in 2015 provided new abilities to address the problem of foreign fighters and prevent radicalism. As recently as November 2015, new funding was made available, providing an additional 1,900 officers to MI5, MI6, and GCHQ in an effort to better respond to international terrorist threats. This new funding also doubled the funds available for aviation security in the UK. The Director General of MI5, Andrew Parker, recently remarked on the increase in resources, “[s]ince the early 2000’s, MI5 has doubled in size to around 4,000 members of staff, and the vast majority of that growth has been in our counter terrorism work, which now makes up more than two-thirds of our effort”.

On an international level, the new United Nations Secretary General’s Preventing Violent Extremism Plan is encouraging a “whole system” approach to counter-terrorism. “[T]his is a welcome step and the UK stands ready to support other countries with this work”, stated the United Kingdom’s Home Secretary Theresa May. The UK is also part of the European Watchlist System, a founding member of the global intelligence community Five Eyes, and has placed exit checks on all international commercial scheduled air, sea, and rail services.

The United Kingdom urges the UNSC to take this opportunity to push forward with combating transnational terrorism. Part of S/RES/1373 resolves to, “[e]nsure that any person who participates in the financing, planning, preparation, or perpetration of terrorist acts or in supporting terrorist acts is brought to justice and ensure that, in addition to any other measures against them, such terrorist acts are established as serious criminal offences in

domestic laws and regulations and that the punishment duly reflects the seriousness of such terrorist acts”. Building off of Resolution 1373, the United Kingdom urges the UNSC to establish an internationally accepted definition of terrorism and an international standard to hold transnational terrorists. The UK also recommends the creation of an International Criminal Tribunal for Transnational Terrorists based on the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Finally, the UK strongly encourages the establishment, in coordination with the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directive (CTED), of a responsible party to intercede for the countries that cannot, or will not, prosecute their citizens who have participated in or supported terrorist activities and that will do so in a timely manner. Because as Theresa May so eloquently observed, “[i]t is no good arresting a person in your own country, if they cannot be brought to justice in theirs”.

II. Creating Conditions for a Durable and Lasting Ceasefire in Syria

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously endorsed the agreement reached on February 26th, 2016, on the Cessation of Hostilities in Syria outlined in Resolution 2268. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) believes this to be a significant step forward for relieving the crisis in Syria after the past horrifying five years of conflict. However, there is much still to be done to ensure this agreement survives and that future progress can be made. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also welcomes the adoption of this resolution, stating that “[t]he full implementation of this resolution - including unimpeded and sustainable humanitarian deliveries - is our best chance to reduce the brutal violence in Syria. What matters now are not the words of the resolution but whether it will make real changes on the ground and reduce the suffering of the Syrian people and create space and the credibility for the UN Special Envoy for Syria to relaunch political negotiation over transition in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué and Resolution 2254”.

Resolution 2268 was drafted carefully by the United States (US) and the Russian Federation. The US Ambassador, Samantha Power, maintains that skepticism is to be expected and acknowledges that this is going to be challenging, while Gennady Gatilov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, stands by crucial elements with respect to “[S]yria’s sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity”. The United Kingdom Ambassador, Matthew Rycroft, understands this fragile agreement and has stressed the importance for Russia to ‘use its unique influence to ensure that parties abide by the agreement’. Regardless of the reasons why, all UNSC parties agree this is the best chance Syria has to end the violence.

After the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister David Cameron announced in September 2015 that the UK would be contributing over \$125 million to emergency funding, \$110 million for life-saving aid in and around Syria, and \$15 million towards migration challenges, International Development Secretary Justine Greening said “[o]nce again the UK is leading the way in meeting the most immediate, basic needs of hundreds of thousands of Syrians caught up in this conflict”. This makes the United Kingdom the second biggest financial contributor to Syrian humanitarian causes. Continuing with the momentum, at the beginning of February 2016, the UK, Norway, Kuwait, Germany, and the UN hosted the “Supporting Syria and the Region” conference to raise funding for immediate and long-term needs of those affected in Syria. It raised over 11 billion dollars in pledges. Understanding that money alone will not create a positive long-term outcome, the conference also set goals on education, to help affected children integrate back into school and avoid a lost generation, economic opportunities and jobs, to enable citizens the ability to work and live in their communities again, and humanitarian aid, focused where it is needed most. Ambassador Rycroft directly acknowledged humanitarian aid regarding Syria when he reiterated “there must be an end to the obstruction of medical aid destined for besieged areas, this practice is completely unacceptable”.

In light of Resolution 2268, and to increase the probability of its success, the United Kingdom urges its fellow UNSC members to build on and reinforce the work of Resolutions 2139, 2165, and 2268, specifically regarding uninhibited access and deliveries of humanitarian aid to all parts of Syria and the affected surrounding areas. The UK further pushes for media access to all parts of Syria and surrounding areas without impediment. “[T]he Council adds most value when responding to events as close to real time as possible... the crises of the world don’t operate on a quarterly basis, so our response to them shouldn’t either” said Ambassador Rycroft. Media coverage will highlight two crucial elements about the current events and provide immediate feedback for the UNSC and the world. First, media coverage alongside humanitarian aid access will provide evidence that resources are, or are not, getting to those in need in the regions they are needed or destined. Second, media coverage will enlighten and educate those who are presently unaware of the Syrian situation and empower more people to aid the relief, with education, supplies, or monetary donations. Additionally, the UK stresses the importance of peaceful negotiations with the local leaders, focusing on a successful political transition, as outlined in Resolution 2254. This is a delicate situation under the best of circumstances, but when we work together, change is possible.