Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary on first official visit to Turkey

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The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson used his first official visit to the country to underline the strong relationship between the UK and Turkey.

During the visit, he held a series of positive discussions with President Erdogan, Prime Minister Yıldırım, Foreign Minister Cavusoglu and Minister of European Union Affairs Celik.

The Foreign Secretary reiterated his solidarity with Turkey's democratically-elected government following July's coup attempt and the UK's wish to see a measured response to the attempt. He also met civil society representatives, visited Turkey's Parliament and the Anıtkabir, to pay tribute to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first President of the Republic of Turkey.

Talks covered other shared priorities including finding a solution to the war in Syria, the fight against Daesh and terrorism, Cyprus settlement talks and building on the strength of UK-Turkish trade relations.

Foreign Secretary visits refugee camp in Turkey

A key focus of the visit was the conflict in Syria, with the Foreign Secretary starting the trip in Istanbul where he met the Syrian Opposition and members of the Syria Civil Defence. Commonly known as the White Helmets, the Civil Defence is the most successful rescue organisation working in opposition-controlled areas of Syria.

Building on UK efforts to help victims of the conflict in Syria, the Foreign Secretary pledged £1 million for de-mining projects to allow essential humanitarian and stabilisation efforts to commence in northern Syrian towns recently liberated from Daesh.

The Foreign Secretary also visited refugees from the war in Syria living in Gaziantep and thanked the Turkish government and its people for their generosity in hosting around three million refugees.

He had an opportunity to see the positive work being done to improve the lives of refugees through UK humanitarian aid worth £2.3bn. This included a visit to Mercy Corps, which, with UK funding, gives life-saving assistance to around 680,000 Syrians each month.

The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, said:

I am delighted to have been able to visit Turkey for the first time as Foreign Secretary. Through discussions with Turkey's leaders, I had the opportunity to build on the considerable co-operation that already exists between our two countries, and consider how we can better harness the enormous trade opportunities we have.

I welcomed Turkey's major contribution to the fight against Daesh, as part of the Global Coalition and congratulated them on the successful clearance of Daesh from the Syrian-Turkish border.

We must continue to work together to address the tragic situation in Syria and support its people, who deserve a future free from the violence of both Daesh and the Asad regime. I am also clear that we have got to continue to put pressure on Russia to help stop the carnage, get the parties back to the negotiating table and stop their proxies in the Assad regime from unleashing violence.

I was also able to see for myself the colossal consequences of this war when I visited Gaziantep to pay tribute to the extraordinary bravery of Syrian Civil Defence and the free Syrian Police. I am proud that the UK supports these organisations, which work in the toughest of circumstances to help the most vulnerable of people.

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