Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

This week at the Foreign Office

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Syria

The Foreign Secretary announced on Thursday that all

diplomatic staff have been withdrawn from the British Embassy

in the Syrian capital Damascus, and embassy services suspended on security grounds.

“We have maintained an Embassy in Damascus despite the violence to help us communicate with all parties in Syria and to provide insight into the situation on the ground. Throughout this time we have kept the security situation of our staff and Embassy premises under intense and constant review. We now judge that the deterioration of the security situation in Damascus puts our Embassy staff and premises at risk, and have taken the decision to withdraw staff accordingly.”

The Foreign Secretary said that the decision to withdraw staff in no way reduces the UK’s commitment to active diplomacy to maintain pressure on the Assad regime to end the violence. On Monday, Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Browne said that those responsible for the atrocities will be held to account for the crimes they have committed when he addressed the

UN Human Rights Council

.

The situation in Syria was also discussed at the EU Foreign Affairs Council this week, where Foreign Ministers agreed

further sanctions on the country

, including freezing the assets of the Central Bank of Syria and restricting the regime’s access to the gold and precious metals market.

**European Union

**Minister for Europe David Lidington said that Europe needs to adapt in order to prosper from the economic realities of the 21st Century when he spoke at the Europe 2020 summit,

which focused on what actions can be taken to

unleash growth and kick-start employment

.

Despite representing 12% of the EU population, only 4.8% of staff working for the EU institutions are British. The

Foreign Secretary wants that to change

:

“The EU needs talented individuals to work in its institutions, to make the right decisions, to work efficiently and effectively. It would be a good thing for Britain for people who know this country, who understand this country, to be working in the EU’s institutions.”

Other news

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The help that staff in the British Consulates in Spain give to British nationals in distress is highlighted in a

Channel 4 documentary called ‘Our Man In’

.

Foreign Office Minister Henry Bellingham welcomed the

declaration of a Marine Protected Area

(MPA) around the UK Overseas Territory of South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands.

Foreign Secretary William Hague said the BBC World Service has been an example of the very best of Britain in

a speech to mark the 80th anniversary

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In pictures: British Consular staff in the Seychelles meet British nationals as they arrive on the

Costa Allegra cruise ship

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/this-week-at-the-foreign-office--75