Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

"If we are to defeat Daesh we must hold them to account for their actions."

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Thank you Mr President, thank you Jeff for your briefing just now.

At the outset, let me express my condolences to the government and people of Iran following the terrible attacks yesterday.

In recent weeks, the United Kingdom has stood firm through senseless terrorist atrocities that targeted innocent people in Manchester and London.

These attacks show the worst of humanity. They seek to intimidate us, to divide us, to undermine our resolve.

They fail every time. In response, ordinary people show the best of humanity. In the UK, we witnessed the men and women of our emergency services, as well as members of the public, show the greatest courage, even risking their own lives to protect others from attack. This Council has a duty now to show the same courage, the same resolve as those ordinary men and women in the face of such brutality.

That’s why the UK is playing a leading role in the Global Coalition Against Daesh. Our collective efforts are bearing fruit. Daesh have lost over two thirds of the ground they once occupied in Iraq and nearly half of that held in Syria. More than 2.5 million people have now been freed from their tyrannical rule.

Make no mistake, we are defeating Daesh on the ground. In Iraq, Mosul will soon be liberated. The Iraqi Security Forces, with support of the coalition, have successfully isolated Daesh to a final holdout in West Mosul. Thanks to the valiant efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces, people are already starting to return to their homes in liberated areas. And in Syria, operations against Raqqah have now begun. It is only a matter of time before Daesh lose their so called capital.

But ultimately, Mr President, degrading Daesh effectively will take time, patience and sustained effort from the international community, including this Council. It’s an effort that goes far beyond military support. And that’s why the Global Coalition is supporting the Government of Iraq to restore security, governance and basic services across Iraq. Helping people rebuild their lives is the first step to winning the peace. To counter the longer-term

threat of Daesh, Iraqis need political reconciliation and reform, and in Syria we need to see a long overdue national political settlement and a transition to a government for all Syrians.

The threat we face is changing. As we successfully degrade Daesh in Syria and Iraq we have seen their propaganda promote attacks elsewhere across the world. We have seen individuals inspired by these calls carry out callous attacks in the name of Daesh. As they lose their caliphate we are seeing their fighters flee. We must work together to deprive Daesh of safe spaces across the world, tackling the threat of foreign fighters travelling to new havens or returning to home countries. We must also bring an end to their havens online.

The pervasive spread of Islamist extremism online has gone on for too long. As one of the leads on the Counter-Daesh Communications effort, and in partnership with coalition countries, the UK has successfully diminished the quantity but also the quality and the impact of that hateful propaganda. We're working with the industry so that together we take a more proactive approach to terrorist and extremist content online.

Engagement so far has resulted in companies strengthening their terms and conditions and the announcement of a shared database which will catalogue known terrorist content from the internet. We have also seen a public commitment from Google, Facebook, Twitter and Microsoft to look at options for establishing an international industry-led forum focused on this issue. There is much more to be done. So let us call on the industry to do the right thing and remove hateful extremist content from their platforms.

And finally, if we are to defeat Daesh we must hold them to account for their actions, whether online or in the real world, and seek justice for all Daesh victims around the world.

That's why the UK launched a UN-led global campaign to bring Daesh to justice; one that will show that Daesh cannot act with impunity. It will act as a deterrent both now and in the future, and help to strengthen global security.

Time is of the essence; it is vital that we act now. We must start gathering evidence before it is lost or destroyed on the battlefield.

So I welcome the discussions we've had with the Government of Iraq on this issue, and the significant statement by Prime Minister Abadi calling at the end of March for, and I quote, "the UN Security Council to issue a resolution to prosecute Daesh's crimes against civilians."

We believe the UK's proposal is the clear way forward for the Council to answer Prime Minister Abadi's call. And we look forward to working with our Iraqi colleagues so that the proposal can be finalised as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/if-we-are-to-defeat-daesh-we-must-hold-them-to-account-for-their-actions