Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Twenty-Fourth Human Rights Council, Geneva, 9 to 27 September 2013

2013-09-10

Item 2 General Debate

Thank you Mr President,

The UK supports the statement delivered on behalf of the EU.

Madam High Commissioner,

Thank you for another comprehensive report. Your office carries enormous responsibilities: helping prevent human rights violations wherever they occur; encouraging respect for human rights by all states; and strengthening the ability of the UN system to respond.

The British Government strongly condemns the violence by all sides in Egypt since 3 July. The UK has consistently called for calm and restraint. We call on the authorities to ensure that there is a swift and thorough investigation into the violence on 14 August.

The UK remains concerned about freedom of expression in Egypt, including the recent arrest of political figures, journalists and the closure of satellite TV stations. The UK has called for detainees to be properly charged or released, and for all cases to be free from any suspicion that they are politically motivated; international standards on detention must be adhered to.

The UK is concerned at the recent upsurge in sectarian violence and the lack of protection for religious minorities; attacks against places of worship must stop.

The UK supports the request made by your office for a UN technical team to visit Egypt and we urge the Egyptian authorities to accept that request.

The UK believes that Egypt can only move forward if all parts of society can play a role in the political process. The UK hopes that the review of the constitution will lead to a document which is inclusive and improves safeguards for human rights, particularly freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

Madam High Commissioner,

Your report highlights the continued deterioration of the situation in Syria. The UK is deeply concerned by evidence of human rights violations and abuses being committed by both sides. However, the UK continues to believe that abuses committed by the opposition do not match the intensity or scale of violations committed by government forces. We call on all sides to put an immediate end to violence.

The regime's use of chemical weapons against civilians in Al Ghouta illustrates the urgent need for full accountability, and a political solution. The UK remains committed to a negotiated settlement that ends the bloodshed and leads to a Syrian-led political transition. The UK fully supports plans for a Geneva II conference.

Madam High Commissioner,

The UK welcomes your recent visit to Sri Lanka, and we look forward to the publication of your report. The UK consistently urges the Sri Lankan Government to make concrete progress on reconciliation, human rights, and accountability.

You and your office continue to face many challenges. The UK will continue to support your role and will always robustly defend your independence to speak out.

Thank you Mr President.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/twenty-fourth-human-rights-council-geneva-9-to-27-september-2013